



## India and Oman

**For Prelims:** Location of Oman and the Neighbourhood, Gulf Cooperation Council, Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), Defence Exercises, Port of Duqm, Indian Ocean Naval Symposium,

**For mains:** Bilateral Groupings & Agreements, Effect of Policies & Politics of Countries on India's Interests, India- Oman Relations, Oman's significance for India.

### Why in News

The **Secretary General of the Ministry of Defence of the Sultanate of Oman** is on a visit to India.

- He will be in Delhi to co-chair the **Joint Military Cooperation Committee (JMCC)** with India's Defence Secretary.



### Key Points

- **Background:**
  - 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**.
  - 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**. Oman has been a **key pillar of India's West Asia Policy**.

- The **Sultanate of Oman is a strategic partner of India in the Gulf and an important interlocutor at the [Gulf Cooperation Council \(GCC\)](#), Arab League and [Indian Ocean Rim Association \(IORA\)](#) fora.**
- **Gandhi Peace Prize** 2019 was conferred on Late HM Sultan Qaboos in **recognition of his leadership in strengthening the ties between India & Oman** and his efforts to promote peace in the [Gulf region](#).
- **Defence Relations:**
  - **Joint Military Cooperation Committee:**
    - The JMCC **is the highest forum of engagement between India and Oman in the field of defence.**
    - The JMCC is **expected to meet annually**, but could not be organised since 2018 when the meeting of the **9<sup>th</sup> JMCC was held in Oman**.
      - The **10<sup>th</sup> JMCC is expected to comprehensively evaluate the ongoing defence exchanges** and provide a roadmap for further strengthening defence ties in the coming years.
  - **Military Exercises:**
    - Army exercise: Al Najah
    - Air Force exercise: [Eastern Bridge](#)
    - Naval Exercise: Naseem Al Bahr
- **Economic & Commercial Relations:**
  - Institutional mechanisms like Joint Commission Meeting (JCM) and Joint Business Council (JBC) oversee economic cooperation between India and Oman.
  - **India is among Oman's top trading partners.**
    - For Oman, India was the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest (after UAE and China) source for its imports and 3<sup>rd</sup> largest market (after UAE and Saudi Arabia) for its non-oil exports in 2019.
  - Major Indian financial institutions have a presence in Oman. **Indian companies have invested in Oman in sectors** like iron and steel, cement, fertilisers, textile etc.
  - **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.**
- **Indian Community in Oman:**
  - There are about **6.2 lakh Indians in Oman**, of which about 4.8 lakh are workers and professionals. There are Indian families living in Oman for more than 150-200 years.
  - There are many **Indian schools offering CBSE syllabus** catering to the educational needs of about 45,000 Indian children.

## Oman's Strategic Significance for India

- **About:**
  - Oman is **India's closest defence partner in the Gulf region** and an important anchor for India's defence and strategic interests.
    - Oman is at the gateway of [Strait of Hormuz](#) through which India imports one-fifth of its oil imports.
  - **Defence cooperation has emerged as a key pillar for the robust India-Oman strategic partnership.** Defence exchanges are guided by a [Framework MOU which was recently renewed in 2021](#).
  - Oman **is the only country in the Gulf region with which all three services of the**

**Indian armed forces conduct regular bilateral exercises** and staff talks, enabling close cooperation and trust at the professional level.

- Oman also **provides critical operational support to Indian naval deployments** in the Arabian sea for anti-piracy missions.
- Bilateral **training cooperation between the two sides is also robust with Omani forces regularly subscribing to training courses in India** both at professional as well as higher command level. Indian armed forces also subscribe to the Staff and Command courses conducted in Oman.
- **Oman also actively participates in the [Indian Ocean Naval Symposium \(IONS\)](#).**
- India has supplied rifles to Oman. Also, India is considering setting up a defence production unit in Oman.

#### ▪ **Port of Duqm:**

- In a strategic move to expand its footprint in the Indian Ocean region, **India has secured access to the key Port of [Duqm](#) in Oman for military use and logistical support.** This is part of India's maritime strategy to counter Chinese influence and activities in the region.
- The **Port of Duqm is situated on the southeastern seaboard of Oman, overlooking the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean.**
- It is strategically located, in close proximity to the [Chabahar port](#) in Iran. With the [Assumption Island](#) being developed in Seychelles and Agalega in Mauritius, **Duqm fits into India's proactive maritime security roadmap.**
- The Port of Duqm also has a [special economic zone](#), where about USD 1.8 billion investments are being made by some Indian companies.

## Way Forward

- India **does not have enough energy resources to serve its current or future energy requirements.** The rapidly growing energy demand has contributed to the need for long term energy partnerships with countries like Oman.
- Oman's Duqm Port is situated in the middle of international shipping lanes connecting East with West Asia.
- India **needs to engage with Oman and take initiatives to utilise opportunities arising out of the Duqm Port industrial city.**
- India should also work closely with Oman to enhance strategic depth in the region and add heft to its [Indo-Pacific vision](#) in the Western and Southern Part of Indian Ocean.

**[Source: IE](#)**

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