



## India-Oman Strategic Dialogue

**Prelims:** India-Oman Strategic Dialogue, India-Oman Relations, Indo-Pacific, Maritime Safety and Security, Terrorism, Arabian Sea, IORA.

**Mains:** India-Oman Relations and its Significance.

### Why in News?

Recently, the **8<sup>th</sup> India-Oman strategic dialogue** was held in India, where both countries have underlined the need to work collectively to fight the challenge of terrorism, terrorist propaganda, abuse of cyberspace and misuse of new and emerging technologies.

- They agreed to hold the next round of the strategic dialogue in Oman in 2024.



## What are the Highlights of the Dialogue?

- Both sides highlighted the high priority accorded by the leadership of both countries to further enhance **their strategic ties based on trust and mutual respect.**
- Discussions were held on a wide range of issues of **mutual interest, including bilateral strategic and security cooperation, defence and regional security.**
- Both sides reiterated the **importance of preserving [Maritime Safety and Security](#)** in the region.
- Both sides reiterated the importance of the **strategic dialogue as an important mechanism of bilateral cooperation between India and Oman.**

## What are the Key Points of India-Oman Relationship?

- **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.
  - 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 (JMCC):**
    - 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 9th JMCC was held in Oman.
  - **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.**
    - India is the **2<sup>nd</sup> largest market for Oman's crude oil exports** for the year 2022 after China.
    - India is also the **4<sup>th</sup> largest market for Oman's non-oil exports for the year 2022 after UAE**, US and Saudi Arabia and 2nd largest source of its import after UAE.
  - 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.

## What is Oman's Strategic Significance for India?

- 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 actively participates in the [Indian Ocean Naval Symposium \(IONS\)](#).
- 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.

## 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.

## UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

### Prelims

**Q. Which of the following is not a member of 'Gulf Cooperation Council'? (2016)**

- (a) Iran
- (b) Saudi Arabia
- (c) Oman
- (d) Kuwait

**Ans: (a)**

**Exp:**

- The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) is an alliance of 6 countries in the Arabian Peninsula – Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. Iran is not a member of the GCC.
- It was established in 1981 to promote economic, security, cultural and social cooperation between the members and holds a summit every year to discuss cooperation and regional affairs.
- **Therefore, option (a) is the correct answer.**

### Mains

**Q. A number of outside powers have entrenched themselves in Central Asia, which is a zone of interest to India. Discuss the implications, in this context, of India's joining the Ashgabat Agreement, 2018. (2018)**

**Q. The question of India's Energy Security constitutes the most important part of India's economic progress. Analyse India's energy policy cooperation with West Asian countries. (2017)**

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