



India and Oman: Programme of Cooperation

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?

Recently, India and Oman signed a **Programme of Cooperation (POC)** in the fields of Science and Technology for the period 2022 – 2025.

- The POC for Cooperation in the fields of Science and Technology was signed in pursuance of the **Agreement for Cooperation in Science and Technology (S&T) concluded on 5th October, 1996** between Oman and India.



What are the Areas of POC?

- Medicinal Plants and processing.

- Real-time [Air Quality Monitoring](#).
- Development of an electronic platform for knowledge sharing in the field of Genetic Resources.
- Technical expertise for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) in the field of sustainability (Eco-Innovate) Accelerator.
- Plastic [Bio-fuel, and Bio-diesel](#) Research (Example: Low-temperature Bio-diesel production).
- Extraction of high-value products from produced water with oil).
- Software development for Graduate Programs – Linking Industry with Academia.
- [Blockchain](#) and [FinTech](#) solutions.
- Training programmes – [Big-data](#), coding & testing, STEM teaching and other areas of S&T.

What does the POC Document Seek?

- **Both countries will support joint scientific projects based on mutual interest**, developed jointly by the Indian and Omani institutions.
- They will **encourage exchange** of scientists, researchers, experts, and specialists for the implementation of selected joint projects aimed at developing applicable technology.
- This will **lead to the dissemination of research results and establishing contacts with industry** for the follow-up of research and development work.
 - The countries will also **hold at least one workshop each year** – alternatively in India and in Oman during 2022 – 2025 period in mutually acceptable areas.

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:**
 - 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.**
 - 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.
 - 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.

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 Questions (PYQs)

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)

Source: PIB