

India-Israel Special Strategic Partnership - Explained

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India-Israel Latest News

- India and Israel elevated their ties to a “Special Strategic Partnership” and signed 17 pacts during Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s 2026 visit to Israel.

India-Israel Bilateral Relationship

- India and Israel established full diplomatic relations in 1992. For several decades prior to that, engagement was limited due to India’s support for the Palestinian cause and the geopolitical realities of the Cold War era.
- However, after the end of the Cold War and the launch of India’s economic liberalisation, ties expanded steadily.
- A major turning point came in 2017, when Prime Minister Narendra Modi became the first Indian Prime Minister to undertake a standalone bilateral visit to Israel. During that visit, the relationship was elevated to a “Strategic Partnership.”

Defence and Security Cooperation

- Defence cooperation forms the backbone of India-Israel relations. Israel is one of India's top defence suppliers, particularly in advanced technologies such as missile systems, UAVs, radar systems and border surveillance equipment.
- The two countries share strong intelligence cooperation and have consistently expressed a common position against terrorism.
- Counter-terrorism collaboration has intensified over the years, reflecting shared security concerns.

Agriculture and Water Management

- Agricultural cooperation has emerged as a model of practical partnership.
- Israel has supported the establishment of multiple Centres of Excellence in Indian states, focusing on horticulture, micro-irrigation, and precision farming. These initiatives have helped Indian farmers improve productivity and water-use efficiency.
- Water conservation, drip irrigation, and desert farming technologies are key areas where Israel's expertise has benefited India.

Trade, Innovation and Technology

- Bilateral trade has diversified beyond defence to include diamonds, chemicals, pharmaceuticals, electronics, and high-technology sectors.
- From US\$ 200 million in 1992 (*comprising primarily of diamonds*), merchandise trade has diversified and reached a peak of US\$ 10.77 billion (*excluding defence*) in FY 2022-23.
- **In FY 2023-24 and FY 2024-25, the bilateral trade (*excluding defence*) was US\$ 6.53 billion and US\$3.75 billion**, respectively, witnessing a decline due to the regional security situation and trade route disruption.
- Innovation and start-ups have become a major area of cooperation. Israel's reputation as a "Start-Up Nation" complements India's large digital ecosystem. Joint research initiatives, academic exchanges, and innovation funds have strengthened knowledge partnerships.

Convergence in West Asia

- India and Israel share increasing strategic convergence in West Asia. While India continues to maintain balanced relations with Arab countries and Iran, its engagement with Israel has become more open and multidimensional.
- India's large diaspora presence and energy security interests in the Gulf region make regional stability a key concern. Both countries view peace and stability as essential for long-term development.

Key Outcomes of PM Modi's 2026 Visit

- Prime Minister Modi's 2026 visit marked a new phase in bilateral ties. The two countries elevated their relationship to a "Special Strategic Partnership for Peace, Innovation and Prosperity."
- Overall, 27 outcomes were announced, including 17 pacts across multiple sectors.

Technology and Emerging Domains

- Technology was central to the visit. A Critical and Emerging Technologies Partnership was launched, covering artificial intelligence, quantum technologies, cybersecurity, and critical minerals.
- An Indo-Israel Cyber Centre of Excellence will be established in India.
- The Joint Commission on Science and Technology was elevated to the ministerial level.
- An MoU on geophysical exploration was signed to enhance cooperation in mineral exploration using advanced geophysical and AI technologies, with a focus on sustainable development.

Defence and Counter-Terrorism

- Both sides acknowledged the significant expansion of defence cooperation and laid out a roadmap for joint development, joint production and transfer of technology.
- The joint statement strongly condemned terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, including cross-border terrorism.

Trade and Economic Cooperation

- The leaders noted progress in negotiations for a Free Trade Agreement and directed officials to work towards its early conclusion.
- An agreement was reached for the use of India's Unified Payments Interface (UPI) in Israel, expanding digital public infrastructure cooperation.
- Cooperation was also expanded in digital health, civil nuclear energy, space, and financial dialogue mechanisms.

Agriculture and Rural Development

- India set a target of expanding Centres of Excellence to 100 and moving towards creating "**Villages of Excellence**" to bring Israeli agricultural technology directly to Indian villages.
- An India-Israel Innovation Centre for Agriculture will support research and future-ready farming solutions.

Connectivity and Regional Cooperation

- The two sides agreed to work closely on the **India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor** (IMEC) and the **I2U2 initiative**.
- Regional tensions, including developments involving Iran and the United States, were discussed. PM Modi reiterated India's belief in dialogue and peaceful resolution of conflicts, noting that India's security interests are directly linked to peace and stability in West Asia.

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