

5. India-Bahrain Relation – International Relations

India and Bahrain to cooperate on fighting terrorism. India and Bahrain are strengthening their strategic partnership, focusing on enhancing defence, maritime security, and counter-terrorism cooperation through intelligence sharing. This move complements a robust economic relationship, with bilateral trade at USD 1.64 billion, growing investments, and new collaborations in space between the Bahrain Space Agency (BSA) and New Space India Limited (NSIL).

High level diplomatic Engagement

Key Meeting – India's External Affairs Minister, S. Jaishankar, recently met with Bahrain's Foreign Minister.

Primary Discussion Point – The ministers discussed enhancing cooperation in defence and security.

Counter-Terrorism Agreement – Both India and Bahrain have agreed to actively combat the threat of terrorism.

Method of Cooperation – This will be achieved through enhanced bilateral (between the two countries) and multilateral (with other countries) cooperation.

Economic & Trade Cooperation

Bilateral Trade Volume – Total trade reached USD 1.64 billion in the fiscal year 2024–25.

Trade Partnership Status – India is ranked among Bahrain's top five trading partners.

Sectoral Diversification – There is a strong emphasis on diversifying trade beyond traditional goods into new sectors, including –

1. Electronics
2. Petroleum products
3. Processed foods
4. Base metals
5. Gems & jewellery

Investment Cooperation

Growth Trajectory – Two-way investments (both Indian investment in Bahrain and vice-versa) are growing significantly.

Recent Growth – Investments have increased by 40% since 2019.

Annual Increase – From the first quarter of 2023 to the first quarter of 2024, investments saw a 15% increase.

Total Investment Value – This growth has brought the total two-way investments to \$1.56 billion.

Space Cooperation

Key Agencies – There is notable progress in collaboration between the Bahrain Space Agency (BSA) and New Space India Limited (NSIL).

Forthcoming Agreement – A draft Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) is currently being finalized.

Objective – The MoU aims to enhance cooperation in satellite technology and various space applications.

Defence and Security

Shared Commitment – Both nations are committed to enhancing defence and security cooperation.

Specific Focus – A particular area of focus is regional maritime security, especially in the Arabian Gulf.

Counter-Terrorism Cooperation

Unified Stance – Both sides issued a strong condemnation of terrorism in all its forms, which explicitly includes cross-border terrorism.

Areas of Collaboration – They have agreed to boost collaboration through –

1. Intelligence sharing
2. Capacity building (training and support)
3. Cybersecurity initiatives

Tourism

Significant Growth – The number of Indian tourists visiting Bahrain increased by 44% between 2022 and 2023.

Visitor Numbers – This surge resulted in tourist arrivals crossing the 1 million mark.

Facilitating Travel – To further boost tourism, India provides an e-visa facility for Bahraini nationals across 9 different categories.

Cultural and People-to-People Ties



Diplomatic Milestone – The two countries are making plans to celebrate 55 years of diplomatic relations in 2026.

Celebrations – This milestone will be marked with various cultural exchanges.

Indian Diaspora – Bahrain is home to a large Indian community, numbering 332,000 people. Both nations welcomed and acknowledged the significant contributions of the Indian diaspora in Bahrain.

Significance of Bahrain for India

Gateway to the Gulf – Bahrain's location, near the western shores of the Gulf, makes it a strategic entry point for India into the entire Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) region.

Maritime Security Partner – Its proximity to key sea lanes of communication (SLOCs) in the Arabian Gulf is crucial. Cooperation with

Bahrain is vital for ensuring the safety of energy supply routes and protecting Indian shipping interests.

Energy Security – While Bahrain is a smaller oil producer compared to other GCC states, it still plays an important role. It contributes to India's energy diversification strategy and is a partner in the refined petroleum trade.

Cultural Diplomacy – The upcoming celebration of 55 years of diplomatic ties in 2026 is not just symbolic; it showcases a long-standing and deep friendship between the two nations.

Way Ahead

Strategic Alignment – Bahrain is a key component of India's "Think West" policy, which focuses on building deeper, more substantive engagement with the Gulf and the wider Middle East.

Regional Stability – The strong India-Bahrain relationship complements India's existing strong ties with the UAE and Saudi Arabia.

Multipolar Order – This web of relationships contributes to a stable and multipolar Gulf order, which is favorable to India's long-term strategic and economic interests.

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