

7. India-Qatar Relation – International Relations

EAM Jaishankar meets Qatar's top leadership, discusses bilateral ties, global issues. India and Qatar have elevated their bilateral ties to a Strategic Partnership in 2025, aiming to double trade to \$28 billion within five years. This move reinforces India's energy security, as Qatar remains its largest LNG supplier, while deepening engagement with the Gulf region despite geopolitical challenges.

1. Context

High-Level Visit – The External Affairs Minister of India met with Qatar's top leadership.

Agenda – Discussions focused on major bilateral aspects, primarily energy and trade, alongside pressing regional and global geopolitical issues.

2. Strategic Partnership & Diplomatic Ties

Elevation of Ties (2025) – In a significant diplomatic milestone, India and Qatar signed an agreement in 2025 to officially elevate their relationship to the level of a Strategic Partnership.

GCC Context – With this agreement, Qatar joins other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) nations with whom India shares this elevated status.

Status of India's Strategic Partnerships in the GCC

Category	Countries
Existing Strategic Partners	United Arab Emirates (UAE), Saudi Arabia, Oman, Kuwait
New Strategic Partner (2025)	Qatar
GCC Member (Non-Strategic Partner status)	Bahrain

3. Economic and Trade Relations

Current Trade Volume – The current annual bilateral trade is valued at \$14.08 billion.

Future Target – Both nations have planned to double their trade to \$28 billion within the next five years.

Energy Security (The Core Pillar) – Qatar remains the largest provider of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) and Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) to India.

Supply Stats (FY 2023-24) –

LNG – 10.91 million metric tonnes.

LPG – 4.92 million metric tonnes.

New Agreements – A Double Taxation Avoidance Treaty was signed to facilitate smoother financial exchanges and investment.

4. Defence Cooperation

Framework – The relationship is anchored by the India-Qatar Defence Cooperation Agreement (signed in 2008, extended in 2018).

Institutional Mechanism – Cooperation is managed and reviewed through the Joint Defence Cooperation Committee (JDCC).

Naval Exercises – The two nations conduct Exercise Zair-Al-Bahr, a joint naval exercise between the Indian Navy and the Qatar Emiri Naval Force (QENF).

Exhibitions – India is a regular participant in the biennial Doha International Maritime Defence Exhibition and Conference (DIMDEX).

5. Labor and Diaspora

Demographics – India has a massive expatriate community in Qatar, numbering over 700,000.

Contribution – This diaspora plays a critical role in Qatar's infrastructure and economic development, particularly in the construction sector and professional services.

6. Regional Context – The Gulf and GCC

Gulf Region Definition – Refers to countries surrounding the Persian Gulf, known for vast oil reserves that influence global economics.

Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)

Nature – A political and economic alliance established in 1981.

Members (6 Nations) – Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, UAE, Qatar, Bahrain, and Oman.

India's Stance – India engages regularly with the GCC and aims to deepen institutional relationships with the bloc.

7. Challenges and Concerns

A. Geopolitical Instability

Conflict Impact – The Hamas–Israel war and subsequent shipping attacks in the Red Sea pose threats to India's energy security and economic growth.

Diplomatic Balancing – India maintains a cautious approach, balancing its relationships with three distinct power centers –

1. The Gulf Nations (Arab states).
2. Iran.
3. Israel.

B. Delays in Connectivity & Trade

Stalled Projects – Recent conflicts have delayed progress for the I2U2 group (India, Israel, UAE, USA) since 2023.

Indian Push – India is urging for progress on initiatives like I2U2 and the India–Middle East–Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) despite the conflict.

FTA Hurdles – There are significant delays in finalizing the India–GCC Free Trade Agreement (FTA).

Reasons – Changes in the GCC's trade negotiator and the difficulty of reaching a consensus that satisfies all GCC member states.

8. Way Forward

Nature of Partnership – The relationship is defined as Strategic, Energy–Critical, and Diaspora–Centric.

Future Roadmap – Success depends on –

1. Strengthening institutional frameworks.
2. Expanding economic complementarities beyond just hydrocarbons.
3. Ensuring the continued welfare of the Indian community.

Source – <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/eam-jaishankar-meets-qatars-top-leadership-discusses-bilateral-ties-global-issues/article70287452.ece>