

4. 2026 Delhi Declaration- International relation

India hosted 22 members of the League of Arab States (AL) for the second India-Arab Foreign Ministers Meeting, 10 years after the first iteration in Bahrain

About the Meeting and the Delhi Declaration

The meeting took place against the backdrop of intensifying geopolitical turbulence in West Asia, marked by-

1. Escalating Iran–United States tensions
2. Growing Saudi Arabia–UAE strategic divergences
3. Renewed US-led diplomatic initiatives to reshape the Israel–Palestine peace process

India and the Arab League issued a Joint Statement titled the “Delhi Declaration”, which-

1. Clarified convergences and divergences on regional conflicts
2. Reaffirmed shared principles on sovereignty and stability
3. Committed to expanding cooperation across political, economic, and security domains

It was announced that the 3rd India–Arab Ministerial Meeting of the Forum will be held in 2028 in an Arab state, ensuring continuity of dialogue.

India–Arab League Engagement- Institutional Framework

The Arab League, officially the League of Arab States, was-

1. Established in Cairo in 1945
2. Initially comprised 7 members
3. Currently includes 22 member states spanning West Asia and North Africa

India–Arab League engagement has evolved through structured institutional mechanisms-

1. India–Arab Foreign Ministers’ Meeting serves as the highest institutional mechanism guiding engagement
2. 2002 MoU institutionalised dialogue and established a regular consultation framework
3. 2008 Memorandum of Cooperation led to the creation of the Arab–India Cooperation Forum (AICF)
4. 2013 revision streamlined structures to enhance effectiveness and coordination
5. India holds Observer Status in the Arab League, enabling diplomatic engagement without formal membership.

Highlights of the Delhi Declaration

Emphasis on Sovereignty and Territorial Integrity

Reiterated strong support for the sovereignty, unity, and territorial integrity of-

1. Sudan
2. Libya
3. Somalia

Rejection of external interference indirectly reflects internal fractures within the Arab world.

Sudan

The Declaration aligns with the Sudanese state against the Rapid Support Forces (RSF)-

1. UAE is accused of backing the RSF
2. RSF has been fighting the Sudanese state since 2023
3. Formation of a parallel government in 2025

India supported-

1. Internationally recognised authorities
2. Condemnation of civilian atrocities
3. Reflects India's opposition to militia-led political legitimacy.

Somalia and Somaliland

Reaffirmed Somalia's territorial integrity-

1. Only Israel recognises Somaliland
2. UAE's 2025 recognition of Somaliland passports diverged from Arab League consensus

India firmly rejected any recognition of Somaliland-

1. Aligns with African Union and Arab League positions
2. Reinforces India's own stance against secessionism.

Yemen and Red Sea Security

India and the Arab League explicitly condemned Houthi attacks in the Red Sea- Marks a shift from India's earlier indirect and cautious language post-2023

Support for Yemen's unity-

1. Aligns with Saudi Arabia's position
2. Indirectly opposes UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council

Reflects India's growing concern over-

1. Maritime security
2. Safety of global trade routes
3. Energy and shipping disruptions.

India's Policy Focus in West Asia- Key Strategic Themes

Primacy of Sovereignty and International Legitimacy

India consistently emphasises-

1. Sovereignty
2. Unity
3. Territorial integrity

Applied across Sudan, Libya, Somalia, and Yemen

Aligns with India's domestic concerns regarding-

1. Secessionism
2. Parallel governments
3. Externally backed non-state actors

Supporting internationally recognised governments allows India to-

1. Remain aligned with international law
2. Avoid military or ideological entanglements.

Quiet Signalling Towards the Saudi-Led Order

Without overt bloc alignment, the Declaration subtly converges with Saudi positions on-

1. Yemen's unity
2. Reconciliation-centric approaches in Libya
3. Support for the Sudanese state over RSF militias

Reflects India's strategic calculation- Saudi Arabia is systemically critical for-

1. Energy security
2. Indian diaspora welfare

3. Stability of the Gulf economic ecosystem

India balances pragmatism with principle.

Managing, Not Confronting, the UAE

Despite divergences on-

1. Sudan
2. Libya
3. Somaliland

India avoided naming or directly criticising the UAE.

This restraint reflects the UAE's importance for India-

1. Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA)
2. Logistics and ports
3. Strategic platforms such as I2U2 and IMEC

India follows an issue-based disagreement model-

1. Differences without strategic rupture
2. Preservation of functional cooperation.

Strategic Silence on Iran-US Military Tensions

The Declaration made no reference to US military presence around Iran.

This deliberate silence enables India to-

1. Maintain ties with Iran
2. Engage Arab states
3. Sustain partnership with the US

Reinforces India's pursuit of multi-alignment rather than bloc politics.

Strategic Autonomy in a Fragmenting West Asia

India's collective positions demonstrate- Autonomy from US-Israeli framing, despite cooperation.

Avoidance of ideological alignment in intra-Arab rivalries

Preference for-

1. Status-quo stability
2. State-centric order
3. Maritime and energy security

Rejection of-

1. Revolutionary movements
2. Militia-driven governance models.

Conclusion

The Delhi Declaration reflects India acting as a status-quo power in West Asia.

Core priorities include-

1. Sovereignty and territorial integrity
2. Regional stability
3. Maritime security

India carefully balances-

1. Saudi Arabia
2. UAE
3. Iran

4. The US

This approach strengthens India's credibility as a pragmatic, autonomous, and stabilising actor in an increasingly fragmented West Asian geopolitical landscape.

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