

Editorial of the Day – 16.02.2026**Index**

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1. The UAE-India Corridor Is Sparking a Growth Story (TH)**General Studies 3– International Relations**

Topic– The UAE-India Corridor Is Driving Growth, Technology, And Strategic Global Expansion

India-UAE Economic Corridor– From CEPA to Strategic Geo-Economic Convergence

The India-UAE relationship has evolved from a traditional energy-trade linkage into a multidimensional strategic partnership integrating trade, investment, technology, energy security, and geopolitics. The signing of the India-UAE Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) in 2022 marked an inflection point, accelerating economic integration and institutionalizing long-term cooperation.

Trade Expansion– Scale, Diversification, and Structural Shift**Early Achievement of \$100 Billion Target**

1. Bilateral trade crossed \$100 billion five years ahead of the 2030 target, demonstrating the catalytic role of CEPA.
2. Both nations have now revised their ambition upward to \$200 billion by 2032, signalling confidence in sustained trade momentum.
3. The achievement reflects a transition from hydrocarbons-led trade to a diversified and value-added trade basket.

Rise of Non-Oil Trade

Non-oil trade increased by approximately 20% year-on-year, reaching \$65 billion.

Key sectors driving growth–

1. Agriculture and processed food
2. Gems and jewellery
3. Textiles and apparel
4. Engineering goods and machinery
5. Chemicals and pharmaceuticals

This diversification reduces vulnerability to oil price volatility and enhances supply chain resilience.

CEPA's Tariff Architecture

1. Eliminated or reduced tariffs on nearly 90% of tariff lines.
2. Facilitated preferential market access for Indian MSMEs and labour-intensive sectors.
3. Strengthened customs cooperation and regulatory harmonization.

Diaspora and Connectivity– The Human and Logistical Backbone**Indian Diaspora as Strategic Asset**

Approximately 5 million Indians reside in the UAE, constituting its largest expatriate community.

The diaspora acts as–

1. A bridge for trade and investment
2. A source of remittances
3. A facilitator of cultural diplomacy

Building Bureaucrats Since 2006

Remittance inflows contribute significantly to India's external stability and consumption base.

Air and Physical Connectivity

Around 1,200 weekly flights, making the India-UAE corridor one of the busiest globally.

High-frequency connectivity supports-

1. Business travel
2. Tourism
3. High-value cargo trade
4. Financial sector integration

The "Two-Way Street" of Investment- Capital Interdependence

Investment Flows Overview

1. UAE investments in India since 2000- \$22+ billion.
2. Indian investments in UAE- \$16+ billion.
3. This reciprocity reflects mutual economic trust and strategic convergence.

A. Indian Investments in the UAE

Energy and Low-Carbon Transition- Reliance Industries- \$2 billion investment in Abu Dhabi for low-carbon chemicals expansion. Demonstrates integration of India's industrial champions into Gulf energy transition ecosystems.

Electric Mobility- Ashok Leyland shifted electric bus manufacturing to Dubai, leveraging logistics efficiency and regulatory support. Indicates UAE's positioning as a global EV export hub.

Renewable Energy Infrastructure- Larsen & Toubro (L&T) constructing large-scale solar-plus-storage projects in Abu Dhabi. Supports UAE's net-zero ambitions while expanding India's EPC footprint.

B. UAE Investments in India

Ports and Logistics- DP World committed \$5 billion toward ports and logistics parks. Enhances India's maritime infrastructure and global value chain integration.

Banking and Financial Sector- Emirates NBD acquired a majority stake in RBL Bank. Strengthens financial sector capitalisation and cross-border banking integration.

Energy Security- ADNOC signed long-term LPG supply agreements with Indian PSUs like Indian Oil and HPCL. Reinforces India's energy security while ensuring stable demand for UAE hydrocarbons.

Sovereign Wealth Funds- ADIA established operations in GIFT City, deepening financial market integration. Mubadala invested \$4 billion in healthcare and renewable energy sectors. Reflects strategic long-term capital placement rather than short-term portfolio flows.

Strategic Policy Architecture- Institutional Foundations

CEPA (2022)

1. Trade facilitation, tariff reduction, services liberalization.
2. Anchors economic cooperation beyond hydrocarbons.

Bilateral Investment Treaty (2024)

1. Strengthens investor protection.
2. Enhances dispute resolution mechanisms.
3. Improves predictability for long-term capital deployment.

Strategic Defence Partnership

1. Expands cooperation in maritime security, counter-terrorism, and defense production.
2. Ensures geopolitical stability for sustained economic engagement.

Bharat Mart Initiative

A wholesale distribution hub in the UAE to serve as a gateway for Indian exports to–

1. Africa
2. West Asia
3. Eurasia

Enhances India's re-export competitiveness and reduces logistical barriers.

Artificial Intelligence Collaboration

1. AI emerging as the next growth frontier in the corridor.
2. India hosting the AI Impact Summit (February 16–20, 2026), the first global AI summit in the Global South.
3. UAE, having appointed the world's first Minister of State for AI in 2017, brings advanced AI governance and infrastructure capabilities.
4. Potential areas of collaboration
 - a. AI in logistics and ports
 - b. Smart cities
 - c. FinTech and digital banking
 - d. Energy optimization and carbon management

Geo-Economic and Strategic Implications

Shift from Energy Dependence to Strategic Partnership

1. Earlier phase– Oil-driven transactional engagement.
2. Current phase– Institutionalized, diversified, capital-intensive strategic partnership.

Integration into Global Value Chains

1. Logistics, ports, and financial integration strengthen India's export competitiveness.
2. UAE serves as a gateway economy linking India to Africa and Europe.

Support for Viksit Bharat 2047

1. Capital inflows enhance infrastructure and manufacturing capacity.
2. Technology transfer accelerates digital and green transitions.
3. Supply chain diversification strengthens economic resilience.

Broader Delhi Declaration Vision

Expands India–Arab cooperation across–

1. Energy transition
2. Technology
3. Maritime security
4. Investment corridors

Conclusion

The India–UAE Economic Corridor represents a transformation from conventional bilateral trade to a strategic geo-economic architecture. CEPA institutionalized trade liberalization; reciprocal investments created capital interdependence; diaspora and connectivity built human integration; and emerging domains like AI and renewable energy are redefining the partnership.

The corridor is no longer merely about hydrocarbons—it is about value chains, capital flows, technological convergence, and strategic stability. In this sense, the India–UAE partnership is evolving

into a model of South-South economic cooperation aligned with India's long-term developmental objective of Viksit Bharat 2047.

Source- <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/the-uae-india-corridor-is-sparking-a-growth-story/article70635903.ece>

2. Bridging A Divide with an 'Indian Scientific Service' (TH)

General Studies 2- Science & Development

Topic- A Dedicated Scientific Cadre Is Needed to Strengthen Governance as Science, Technology and Environmental Challenges Become Central

Proposal for an Indian Scientific Service (ISS)- Institutionalising Science in Governance

The proposal to establish a dedicated Indian Scientific Service (ISS) seeks to structurally embed scientific expertise within the higher echelons of public administration. It aims to transition India's governance architecture from a predominantly generalist administrative model toward a hybrid framework combining managerial coordination with domain-specific technical authority.

Historical Context- From Steel Frame to Knowledge State

Post-1947 Administrative Continuity

1. India retained the colonial-era civil services after Independence to preserve unity, continuity, and stability.
2. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel characterised the services as the "steel frame", underscoring their role in nation-building and integration.
3. The Indian Administrative Service (IAS) evolved as a versatile, generalist leadership cadre.

Suitability of the Generalist Model

In early decades, governance challenges centred on-

1. Land reforms
2. Institutional consolidation
3. Development planning
4. Public order and welfare administration

Officers rotated across departments, promoting coordination and administrative coherence.

Structural Shift in Governance Complexity

Contemporary governance is characterised by-

1. Climate modelling and carbon markets
2. Artificial Intelligence regulation and algorithmic governance
3. Cybersecurity and digital sovereignty
4. Biotechnology and genomic surveillance
5. Pandemic preparedness and epidemiological forecasting

These domains demand advanced technical literacy, interdisciplinary systems thinking, and long-term risk modelling—competencies not inherently cultivated within traditional generalist training.

The Governance Paradox- Science Without Authority

Institutional Constraint

1. Government scientists in institutions such as DRDO, ISRO, CSIR labs, and regulatory bodies operate under standard civil service rules.
2. Despite subject-matter expertise, they frequently lack policy-level decision-making authority.
3. Technical recommendations may be overridden by administrative hierarchies.

Bureaucratic systems emphasise-

1. Procedural compliance
2. File-based decision-making
3. Hierarchical deference

Scientific practice prioritises-

1. Hypothesis testing
2. Evidence-based dissent
3. Peer scrutiny
4. Iterative learning

This divergence can suppress innovation and discourage critical evaluation of policy assumptions.

Advisory Marginalisation

1. In many ministries, scientific advisory roles remain consultative rather than determinative.
2. Advice is non-binding and subject to administrative discretion.
3. Risk assessments are often subordinated to short-term political or fiscal considerations.

Reactive Versus Anticipatory Governance

Reactive Deployment of Science

Scientific expertise is frequently mobilised post-crisis, such as-

1. Environmental disasters
2. Air pollution emergencies
3. Public health outbreaks
4. Cyberattacks

This reactive posture increases economic and social costs.

Need for Anticipatory Governance

Embedding scientists at the policy design stage would enable-

1. Early risk identification
2. Long-term modelling of climate and demographic transitions
3. Evidence-informed regulation of emerging technologies
4. Strategic foresight in biosecurity and digital governance

An institutionalised scientific cadre would support preventive, risk-informed policymaking rather than episodic crisis management.

Proposed Indian Scientific Service (ISS)- Structural Design

Creation of a New All-India Service

1. ISS would function alongside IAS, IPS, and IFS.
2. Cadre officers would be deployed across Union ministries, state governments, regulatory agencies, and strategic institutions.

Specialised Recruitment Model

Selection through evaluation of-

1. Peer-reviewed publications
2. Research impact
3. Domain expertise
4. Technological leadership

Building Bureaucrats Since 2006

Recruitment could occur at multiple career stages, including lateral entry. Emphasis on meritocratic scientific credentials rather than generalist competitive examination alone.

Defined Functional Role

ISS officers would provide–

1. Technical feasibility assessments
2. Regulatory impact analysis
3. Long-term risk forecasting
4. Scientific validation of public projects

Administrators would continue handling coordination, finance, and interdepartmental alignment. This creates a complementary governance architecture, not a replacement of the generalist model.

Global Best Practices

Institutionalised Scientific Services

Countries with structured scientific integration include

1. United States – Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP), Chief Science Advisors, federal scientific cadres.
2. United Kingdom – Government Office for Science and departmental Chief Scientific Advisers.
3. France, Germany, Japan – Formalised research-policy linkages within ministries.

Scientific Integrity Frameworks

The United States implements Scientific Integrity Policies that–

1. Protect researchers from political interference
2. Mandate transparency in documenting scientific advice
3. Safeguard publication autonomy

These frameworks ensure credibility, independence, and public trust in scientific governance.

Potential Advantages of an ISS

Enhanced Policy Quality– Integration of quantitative modelling, AI tools, and scenario analysis into governance. Reduced reliance on ad hoc committees.

Improved Regulatory Capacity– Stronger oversight of biotechnology, fintech, climate markets, and digital platforms.

Strengthened National Security– Scientific expertise in cybersecurity, quantum technologies, and defence innovation.

Long-Term Strategic Planning

Alignment with India's goals in–

1. Net-zero transition
2. Semiconductor manufacturing
3. Space economy expansion
4. Bioeconomy development

Implementation Challenges

Inter-Service Coordination– Avoiding bureaucratic turf conflicts between generalists and specialists.

Career Progression Structure– Designing promotion pathways comparable in prestige and authority to IAS positions.

Federal Adaptation– Harmonising Union and State-level deployment.

Strategic Rationale in the Indian Context

As India transitions toward

1. A \$5 trillion economy and beyond
2. A digitally integrated governance ecosystem
3. Climate-resilient infrastructure
4. AI-enabled public service delivery

Governance must evolve from administrative command to knowledge-based statecraft.

The ISS proposal aligns with–

1. Atmanirbhar Bharat in high-technology sectors
2. Viksit Bharat 2047 vision
3. Strengthening India's role in global science diplomacy

Conclusion

The establishment of an Indian Scientific Service represents a shift from episodic consultation to institutionalised scientific governance. It acknowledges that 21st-century statecraft is increasingly technical, data-intensive, and risk-sensitive.

Rather than relying solely on generalist administrators supported by ad hoc advisory committees, India requires durable institutional reform that embeds scientific authority within decision-making structures. A well-designed ISS could create a hybrid governance model—where administrative coordination and scientific rigour operate in tandem—ensuring resilient, anticipatory, and evidence-based policymaking in an era of technological transformation.

Source– <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/bridging-a-divide-with-an-indian-scientific-service/article70635864.ece>