

NEWSLETTER

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Director's MESSAGE

It is a pleasure to present the UAE-India CEPA Council's (UICC) first quarterly newsletter for 2025. Last year was highly successful, and I am confident that 2025 will provide a range of opportunities to further leverage the potential of the UAE-India Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA).

On 18 February 2025, we proudly marked the third anniversary of the signing of this historic agreement. Since its signing, the bilateral economic partnership has entered a new era, with the CEPA evolving beyond its initial framework, to becoming a dynamic force driving ties between our two countries. The issuance of hundreds of thousands of Certificates of Origin since the CEPA's implementation is a clear testament to its success. Moreover, through the operationalisation of various joint committees, both governments are continuously collaborating on addressing challenges and finding new opportunities so that businesses are able to reap maximum benefit from this agreement.

At the UICC, we remain committed to further strengthening this growing partnership and ensuring that businesses on both sides realise tangible benefits. We aim to foster inclusive and diverse partnerships, with a special focus on startups, micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), and women entrepreneurs. In line with these objectives, on 23 January 2025, we hosted a Women's Entrepreneurship Roundtable in collaboration with the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry Ladies Organisation (FICCI-FLO Mumbai Chapter). The roundtable in Mumbai brought together over 40 Indian women entrepreneurs from a diverse range of industries, underscoring the vital role of women entrepreneurship and empowerment in strengthening UAE-India bilateral relations.

Looking toward the year ahead, the UICC will continue to expand its presence and interactions throughout the UAE and India. We remain committed to ensuring that the CEPA serves as a transformative framework for businesses in both countries.

We hope you enjoy this latest edition of our newsletter.

Ahmed Aljneibi

Director, UAE-India CEPA Council





Celebrating Three Years of the UAE-India CEPA

KEY FACTS AND INSIGHTS

The UAE-India Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) marked its third anniversary on 18 February 2025, ushering in a new era of economic, trade, and investment cooperation between the two nations. Since its implementation, the agreement has strengthened economic ties between the UAE and India, creating exciting new opportunities for both countries.





Fastest Deal Ever: The UAE-India CEPA was negotiated in just 88 days, making it one of the fastest trade agreements to be ever signed by India.



CEPA vs FTA – What's the Difference? Unlike a traditional Free Trade Agreement (FTA), a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) is more comprehensive and ambitious, covering a wider range of areas such as services, investment, intellectual property, government procurement, and dispute resolution.



Streamlining Customs for Faster Trade: The UAE-India CEPA simplifies customs clearance through transparent, risk-based inspections, and paperless documentation. With advance rulings and closer cooperation between customs administrations, the agreement ensures faster and more efficient trade between the two nations.



Pioneering E-Commerce Chapter: The UAE-India CEPA is the first agreement signed by India to include a dedicated chapter on e-commerce and digital trade, marking a historic move towards enhancing online trade between the two nations and fostering a more seamless digital economy.



Empowering SMEs for Growth: The UAE-India CEPA includes a dedicated chapter on SMEs, recognising their vital role in driving economic growth and competitiveness in both nations. Through the establishment of a UAE-India SME Committee, it promotes joint activities that enhance the capacity of SMEs, helping them access and benefit from the trade and investment opportunities in the two nations.



A First in Government Procurement: The UAE-India CEPA is the first trade agreement where India has committed to specific provisions on government procurement. This opens up both UAE and Indian markets to each other's companies for public sector contracts, creating new opportunities for collaboration in government tenders.



Boosting Investment Opportunities: The UAE-India CEPA paves the way for greater investment by allowing enhanced market access across hundreds of service sub-sectors in both countries. Additionally, it led to the signing of a new Bilateral Investment Treaty between the two countries, replacing the 2013 version, further strengthening investment ties and offering enhanced protection for investors.



A Game-Changer for Indian Pharma: For the first time in any trade agreement, a separate Annex on Pharmaceuticals has been incorporated to facilitate access of Indian pharmaceuticals, specifically the automatic registration and marketing authorisation of Indian medicines in the UAE within 90 days, if approved by regulators in the United States, the United Kingdom, the European Union, or Japan.



Diversifying Trade for Stronger Growth: The UAE-India CEPA has successfully increased non-oil trade, which reached USD 57.8 billion in FY 2023-24, making up more than half of total trade. This progress is in line with the goal of reaching USD 100 billion in bilateral non-oil trade by 2030.



UAE-INDIA WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP ROUNDTABLE



The UAE-India CEPA Council (UICC) hosted a Women's Entrepreneurship Roundtable in Mumbai on 23 January 2025, in collaboration with the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry Ladies Organisation (FICCI-FLO Mumbai Chapter). This marked the eighth roundtable conducted by the UICC in India. Bringing together over 40 women business owners and entrepreneurs from diverse industries, the focus of the event was to highlight opportunities that exist for women entrepreneurs to benefit from the CEPA signed by the UAE and India. The inaugural address of the session was delivered by Ms. Aarmeen Mogul Dordi, Chairperson FICCI FLO Mumbai Chapter. Noting the potential of the CEPA, Ms. Dordi reaffirmed FICCI FLO Mumbai's commitment to empowering women-led businesses as active contributors to the growth of the UAE-India bilateral economic partnership.



The session was chaired by H.E. Abdulnasser Jamal Alshaali, PhD, the UAE Ambassador to India, who emphasised growing UAE-India economic ties and the role of women entrepreneurs in fostering trade and investment. Ms. Kawther Alkharoossi, Investments Support and Inducements Senior Specialist at the UAE Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Economic and Trade Affairs Department, provided an overview of the UAE's investor-friendly environment, highlighting the key sectors and support available for business expansion.

Key presentations were delivered by Ms. Joyshree Das Verma, FICCI FLO National President, and Ms. Kiran Gera, former National President, FICCI FLO, who both underscored FLO's long-standing commitment to women entrepreneurs and collaboration with the UAE. Mr. Ahmed Aljneibi, Director of the UICC, discussed the advantages of the CEPA for women entrepreneurs and the UAE's position as a global business hub.

The event concluded with an insightful interactive session whereby business owners were provided an opportunity to enquire about potential opportunities for expansion into the UAE market. Various sector-specific queries were raised, including export opportunities, e-commerce, incentives for women entrepreneurs, and compliance requirements for SMEs. The event reinforced the significance of women's entrepreneurship in strengthening UAE-India economic ties and highlighted new avenues for collaboration and investment.





[Haryana: UAE Ambassador Opens Four Padel Courts at Jindal University](#)

H.E. Abdunnasser Jamal Alshaali, PhD, the UAE Ambassador to India, inaugurated four state-of-the-art padel courts at OP Jindal Global University (JGU) in Sonipat on 7 January 2025.



[UAE Ambassador Visits Surat to Strengthen Bilateral Ties, Explore Investment Opportunities](#)

H.E. Abdunnasser Jamal Alshaali, PhD, the UAE Ambassador to India, travelled to Surat, Gujarat. During the visit, the Ambassador had an opportunity to engage with several local business leaders and participated in a roundtable discussion organised by the Southern Gujarat Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SGCCI) in collaboration with the UICC.



[EAM Jaishankar meets UAE Diplomatic Advisor, Discusses Strengthening UAE-India Partnership](#)

External Affairs Minister (EAM) Dr. S. Jaishankar held a meeting with HE Dr. Anwar Gargash, Diplomatic Advisor to the President of the UAE, during an official visit to the UAE. Sharing the update on X, Dr. S. Jaishankar said, "Nice to meet Anwar Gargash, Diplomatic Advisor to the President, UAE this morning. Discussed our special partnership and its further progress.



[Foreign Secretary Misri visits Dubai](#)

Vikram Misri, Foreign Secretary, undertook a visit to Dubai and met with several UAE Ministers. During the meetings, discussions centred on strengthening strategic partnerships, regional cooperation, and humanitarian assistance.



[India Energy Week 2025: IOC, BPCL Ink Pacts with UAE to Import LNG](#)

During India Energy Week 2025, IOC and BPCL signed a major agreement with ADNOC to import LNG.



[BAPS Hindu Mandir in Abu Dhabi Celebrates First Anniversary with 13,000 Devotees](#)

THE BAPS Hindu Mandir in Abu Dhabi marked its first anniversary with a large gathering, coinciding with the UAE's Year of Community. The event, titled "Mandir: The Heart of Community," was attended by UAE officials, community leaders, and devotees.



[UAE-India Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement Completes Three Years of Signing](#)

18 February 2025 marked three years since the signing of the UAE-India CEPA. The Agreement was originally signed in 2022 during a virtual summit between HH Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the UAE and Shri Narendra Modi, the Prime Minister of India. The Agreement entered into force on 1 May 2022.

BUSINESS IN FOCUS



As part of its continual efforts to promote the crucial role that businesses both large and small play in supporting the broader UAE-India partnership, each issue of the UICC newsletter provides an in-depth overview of a UAE or Indian company that is making a positive contribution in driving the bilateral relationship forward.

Beyond Borders

Beyond Borders is a community-driven initiative dedicated to fostering cultural exchange, professional networking, and international collaboration. Founded by Tehmina Khandwala, it was established with the objective of creating meaningful connections across geographical and cultural boundaries. The platform facilitates engagement among individuals from diverse backgrounds, enabling them to explore new perspectives, build professional relationships, and participate in immersive global experiences.

The initiative was conceived following Tehmina Khandwala's tenure as Chairperson of FICCI FLO Mumbai Chapter in 2023. Recognising the need for a structured platform that promotes cross-border dialogue and entrepreneurship, she sought to develop a community that bridges geographical divides while encouraging diversity and innovation. Envisioning a world where borders are bridges and not barriers, she started the initiative to facilitate social connections, travel adventures, and business collaborations across a range of countries.



Tehmina Khandwala

Founder of Beyond Borders



Since its inception, Beyond Borders has organised several international engagements. In 2022-23, it facilitated the visit of a FICCI FLO delegation to Doha, Qatar, providing participants with the opportunity to interact with the Qatar Businesswomen Council (QBWC) and its President, H.E. Sheikha Al Anood Bint Khalifah Bin Hamad Al Thani. In May 2023, members of the community traveled to Kashmir, where they explored local traditions, engaged with artisans, and participated in cultural and adventure-based activities.

The next engagement is scheduled to take place in Dubai, UAE, from 7-10 April 2025. This visit will focus on facilitating interactions between community members and local entrepreneurs, artists, and industry professionals. Through a series of structured networking sessions and cultural experiences, Beyond Borders aims to strengthen business collaborations, encourage knowledge-sharing, and further its mission of fostering cross-cultural understanding.

By providing a platform for individuals to connect beyond geographical constraints, Beyond Borders continues to support professional growth, international cooperation, and cultural exchange.





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