



UAE-INDIA
CEPA COUNCIL

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Table of Contents

Director's Message	03
A Decade of Progress: 10 Years of Growing the UAE-India Strategic Partnership	04
The UAE - India CEPA Council Start-Up Series	08
UICC Start-up Series: Launch Event	09
UAE-India Latest News	10
Business In Focus: Champatree Art Gallery	12

Director's Message

It is a pleasure to present the second quarterly newsletter of the UAE-India CEPA Council (UICC) for 2025. With the first half of the year behind us, this is a timely opportunity to take stock of the progress made so far.

On 1 May 2025, we marked the third anniversary of the implementation of the UAE-India Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA). In just three years, the agreement has gone well beyond words on paper to deliver tangible economic outcomes. One notable achievement is India emerging as the United Arab Emirates' top non-oil export destination in 2024, with a remarkable 75.2 percent year-on-year growth.

As we reflect on the growing economic partnership, both countries continue to look towards a future-oriented roadmap. In 2022, during the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the UAE and India, the leadership of both nations outlined a long-term vision to deepen the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. This vision aims to enhance both the breadth and depth of collaboration and set the pace for the next 50 years of UAE-India relations.

Recognising the rapid rise of start-ups in both countries, the two governments committed to promoting cross-border start-up collaboration as a key pillar of this strategic roadmap. Both leaders encouraged their officials and stakeholders to explore the sectors and mechanisms through which entrepreneurs from the UAE and India could engage more meaningfully with each other's ecosystems.

It is against this backdrop that I am proud to announce the launch of the UAE-India CEPA Council Start-up Series, a new initiative designed to identify and support promising Indian start-ups in their international expansion. Through incubation, mentorship, and ecosystem integration, the Series reflects our commitment to ensuring that the CEPA delivers real, on-the-ground opportunities for businesses in both countries.



We sincerely hope that this platform enables Indian start-ups to engage deeply with UAE-based stakeholders and develop market-ready solutions to shared regional challenges. On a personal note, I look forward to engaging with the dynamic Indian start-up community and hope that we are able to reach founders from all across the country, whose innovative ideas have the potential to drive impact far beyond borders.

We hope you enjoy this latest edition of our newsletter. The UICC remains committed to supporting your business objectives and strengthening the UAE-India relationship.

Ahmed Aljneibi

Director, UAE-India CEPA Council



A Decade of Progress

10 Years of Growing the UAE-India Strategic Partnership

The UAE and India share a deep-rooted relationship shaped by centuries of trade, cultural exchange, and migration - well before the two nations emerged in their present form. These enduring ties laid a natural foundation for the formalisation of diplomatic relations in 1972. Since then, the partnership has grown steadily, supported by mutual respect, strong diaspora connections, and expanding commercial interests.

Over the past decade, however, the relationship has entered an unprecedented phase of dynamism and depth. Strategic alignment, robust economic cooperation, and people-to-people connectivity have transformed the UAE-India partnership into one of the most multifaceted in the region. This period has witnessed high-level diplomatic engagements, landmark agreements, and collaboration across a range of emerging sectors such as fintech, food security, and defence. This evolving partnership reflects not just shared ambitions, but a strategic convergence rooted in trust and long-term commitment.





2015

A Pivotal Visit

Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited the UAE in 2015, becoming the first Indian Prime Minister to do so in 34 years. The visit marked the beginning of a revitalised phase in bilateral engagement between the two countries.



2017

Strategic Partnership Takes Shape

His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the UAE, who was then the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, attended India's Republic Day celebrations in 2017 as the Chief Guest, highlighting the growing warmth in bilateral relations. During the same visit, the UAE-India relationship was formally elevated to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, marking a pivotal moment in diplomatic engagement.



2019

Financial Connectivity Grows

The RuPay card was launched for use in the UAE, enabling secure and seamless digital transactions for the Indian diaspora and businesses, and enhancing financial connectivity between the two economies.

2021

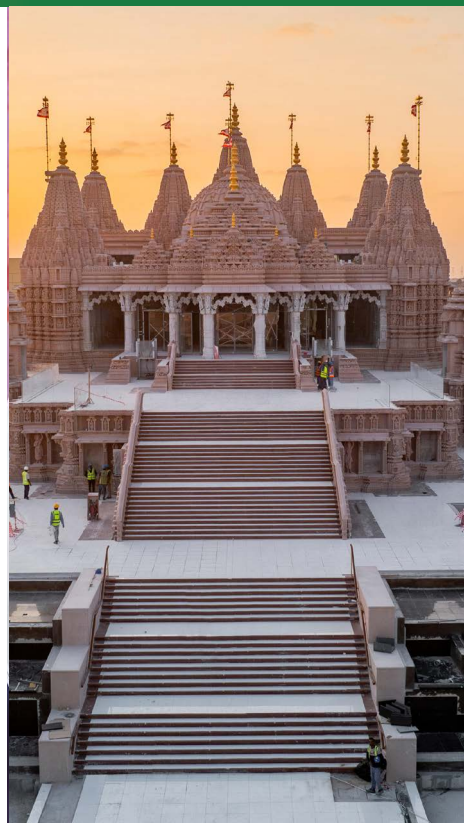
Sovereign Investment in Sustainability

In October 2021, the UAE pledged USD 75 billion in sovereign investment to India, targeting infrastructure development and clean energy. This landmark commitment reflected a shared vision for sustainable and inclusive growth, and helped set the momentum for a wave of new joint initiatives that would further deepen bilateral economic cooperation.

2022

CEPA: A New Economic Architecture

The UAE-India Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) was signed and came into force in record time. Aside from a large-scale reduction in tariffs, the agreement introduced several first-of-its-kind provisions, laying the groundwork for deeper, long-term economic collaboration between the two countries.



2024

Cultural Diplomacy: BAPS Mandir Inauguration

The BAPS Hindu Mandir was inaugurated in Abu Dhabi, becoming the first traditional Hindu stone temple in the UAE as well as the entire Middle East. Its opening marked a milestone in cultural diplomacy, interfaith harmony, and the Indian diaspora's role in fostering deeper societal ties.

High-Level Visit: Sheikh Khaled bin Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan in India

In September, His Highness Sheikh Khaled bin Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, made his first official visit to India, reflecting deepening strategic trust between the two nations. He paid tribute to Mahatma Gandhi at Rajghat, met President Droupadi Murmu, and led a high-level delegation to a business forum in Mumbai, strengthening ties in trade, innovation, and investment.

2025

Comprehensive Engagement: Visit of Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed Al Maktoum

In April, His Highness Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Crown Prince of Dubai and UAE Deputy Prime Minister, undertook his maiden official visit to India, reinforcing the breadth and depth of the bilateral relationship. The visit resulted in the signing of eight significant Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) across trade, education, logistics, and healthcare. Notable outcomes included an agreement with IIM for academic collaboration and the announcement of a UAE-India Friendship Hospital. The engagements reflected a holistic approach to cooperation, strengthening institutional ties and advancing shared goals across a wide range of important sectors.



The UAE-India CEPA Council **Start-up Series**

The UAE-India CEPA Council (UICC) is proud to announce the launch of the Start-up Series, a flagship initiative created to promote, support, and connect high-potential Indian start-ups with meaningful opportunities in UAE and global markets. This initiative reflects the shared commitment of the UAE and India, under the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), to deepen cross-border innovation and foster entrepreneurial growth.

By bringing together India's entrepreneurial talent and the UAE's business-friendly regulatory environment, the Start-up Series creates a unique platform for cross-border collaboration. It aims to strengthen engagement between start-ups, investors, incubators, and entrepreneurs, enabling them to jointly address global challenges with bold, market-ready solutions.

Structured over several months, the Series follows a multi-stage evaluation process and will conclude with a final pitch event in New Delhi. A handful of Indian start-ups will be selected through this process and will receive tailored incubation and soft-landing support in the UAE, including mentorship, workspace, licensing, and direct access to innovation hubs. The initiative is designed to foster meaningful connections between founders, investors, and ecosystem enablers, enabling long-term integration into the UAE market.

The Start-up Series is a direct realisation of the shared ambitions outlined in Article 13.2 of the UAE-India CEPA, which commits both nations to closer cooperation in and integration of the start-up ecosystem. By enabling knowledge exchange and cross-border market access, this initiative contributes to the long-term resilience, diversity, and depth of UAE-India economic relations. The objective is to promote entrepreneurial growth, strengthen bilateral innovation linkages, and position the CEPA as not just a trade agreement, but as a catalyst for cross-border entrepreneurship.



UICC Start-Up Series

Launch Event

On 24 June 2025, the UAE-India CEPA Council (UICC), in partnership with the UAE Embassy, hosted a landmark event in New Delhi to officially launch the UAE-India CEPA Council Start-up Series. This event marked the beginning of a strategic initiative aimed at fostering cross-border innovation and investment, and also signalled the opening of nationwide applications for Indian start-ups looking to scale their presence into the UAE.

The event, presided over by H.E. Abdalnasser Jamal Alshaali, PhD, UAE Ambassador to India, brought together over 100 distinguished guests, including start-up founders, business leaders, government officials, influencers, and heads of leading incubators.



The focus of the evening was to highlight the purpose and ambition behind the Start-up Series and to unveil its microsite, signalling the formal opening of the application process. The programme commenced with special remarks by Ambassador Alshaali, after which the promotional trailer of the Series was showcased. Mr. Ahmed Aljneibi, Director of the UICC, delivered a comprehensive presentation on the Series, detailing its structure, objectives, and implementation plan, which concluded with the official launch of the microsite.

A significant highlight of the event was the signing of Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) between the UICC and three key Indian institutions, PRIME Meghalaya (the Meghalaya State Government's incubator), the IDEATE Lab at O.P. Jindal Global University, and Jamia Hamdard University. These partnerships underscore a shared commitment to identifying, nurturing, and elevating regional start-up talent across India.

The formal programme concluded with a networking session, offering a dynamic platform for informal engagement and dialogue. The event successfully set the stage for the Series, attracting diverse voices from across India's start-up and policy ecosystem, and building strong momentum for the journey ahead.



From left to right: Mr. Tejavan Gandhok, Director, IDEATE Lab, Jindal Global University; Prof. (Dr.) M. Afshar Alam, Vice-Chancellor, Jamia Hamdard University; Ms. Saloni Verma, IAS, Executive Director, PRIME Meghalaya.



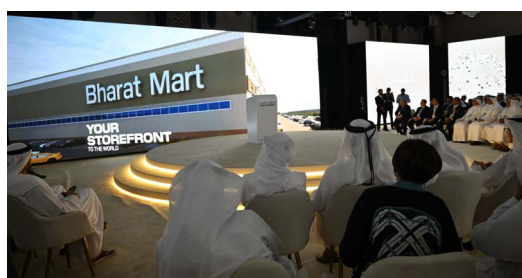
[RAKEZ Completes Successful India Tour to Boost UAE-India Trade Relations](#)

Ras Al Khaimah Economic Zone (RAKEZ) successfully wrapped up a weeklong roadshow across three major Indian cities—Lucknow, Vadodara, and Coimbatore—in collaboration with the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry and supported by the Federation of Gujarat Industries, Bharat Startup and Innovation Society, and the Coimbatore District Small Industries Association. The initiative aimed to explore business opportunities and foster cross-border collaborations between India and UAE-based enterprises.



[IIT Delhi Abu Dhabi sees 400 percent enrolment rise in just one year](#)

The Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Delhi witnessed a remarkable 400 percent increase in student enrolment at its Abu Dhabi campus within just one year of its establishment.



[DP World commences construction of Bharat Mart](#)

Logistics solution provider DP World said it has commenced the construction of Bharat Mart, a global B2B and B2C marketplace in Dubai, designed to facilitate trade between Indian businesses and global markets.



[Indian Air Force joins multinational Exercise Desert Flag-10 in UAE](#)

The Indian Air Force (IAF) dispatched a contingent to the UAE to participate in Exercise Desert Flag-10, a multinational air combat training event. Scheduled from 21 April to 8 May 2025, the exercise was hosted by the UAE Air Force and included air forces from 11 other nations such as Australia, Bahrain, France, Germany and Qatar, among others.



"Reaffirmed Strength Of UAE-India Ties": HH Sheikh Hamdan Bin Mohammed Al Maktoum, Dubai Crown Prince On Meet With PM Modi

His Highness Sheikh Hamdan Bin Mohammed Al Maktoum, Crown Prince of Dubai, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) reaffirmed the strength of UAE-India ties following a meeting with Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi in New Delhi. The Crown Prince of Dubai had arrived in India on a two-day visit at the invitation of Prime Minister Modi. The visit marked his first official trip to India of HH Sheikh Hamdan as Crown Prince.



India, UAE open skies agreement is key to lowering airfares, urges new report

A new report titled "Combined Skies: Unlocking the Benefits of UAE-India Aviation Liberalisation for Indian Travellers", released by the Observer Research Foundation makes a strong case for liberalising air service agreements between the two countries.



Uttarakhand seeks UAE investment in key sectors

The UAE Deputy Chief of Mission, Mr Majid AlNekhailawi, met with Ajay Mishra, Resident Commissioner of Uttarakhand in New Delhi. The meeting focused on potential areas of investment between Uttarakhand and the UAE, with a focus on economic cooperation in critical sectors.

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.



Champatree Art Gallery

Contemporary Practice with Purpose

Founded in New Delhi in 2016, Champatree Art Gallery presents contemporary Indian art while nurturing the people who make and engage with it. Each exhibition—painting, installation, new-media work or performance — is developed through careful research and close dialogue with artists. In parallel, the gallery's not-for-profit sister, the Art For Art Foundation (A4A), offers residencies , grants , workshops and school outreach . This two -tier structure lets Champatree sell art, mentor talent and widen public access simultaneously.

The gallery is rooted in affordability and openness. Talks, accessible editions, and school visits invite first-time viewers as well as seasoned collectors. On the advisory side, the team works with architects and designers to integrate art into homes, offices, and public spaces, matching aesthetics with a client's story and setting.

Champatree is now exploring a phased expansion into the UAE, with Abu Dhabi as its anchor. The plan includes launching a virtual gallery and artist portal, building partnerships with local institutions, and eventually establishing a satellite gallery space. This aligns with the UAE's vision of arts-led cultural diplomacy, and the team looks forward to collaborating with galleries, curators, and cultural bodies across the region.





Pooja Bahri

Co-founder, multidisciplinary artist and A4A mentor, Pooja brings a maker's insight to the gallery's programme. Winner of the gold medal for video art at the 2011 Florence Biennale, she works across performance, VR, and socially engaged installations. Her focus on ecology, gender and cultural policy shapes Champatree's curatorial voice and the Foundation's learning modules. Pooja's background in policy research adds rigour to every project—whether drafting fellowship criteria or designing audience-participation tools and helps younger artists navigate funding, documentation and public discourse.

Archana's architectural precision and Pooja's conceptual breadth allow Champatree to operate as both marketplace and incubator. The result is a gallery that sells confidently yet measures impact not only in sales figures but in conversations sparked, careers launched, and communities reached.



Archana Sapra

An architect by training and an independent curator by choice, Archana anchors Champatree's spatial and conceptual thinking. Years spent designing museums and mounting large-scale shows—with partners such as Lalit Kala Akademi, NGMA and the Museum of Sacred Arts—have sharpened her eye for how art inhabits space and how audiences move through it. That experience feeds directly into the gallery's clear sight-lines, thoughtful installation methods and seamless viewer flow. Her networks in architecture and design also help place artists' works in built environments, turning exhibition ideas into lasting commissions.



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