



The Arabian Sea Dialogue



CONNECT. CREATE. COLLABORATE.

September 2022

CONFERENCE REPORT





The Arabian Sea Dialogue



CONNECT. CREATE. COLLABORATE.



© 2023 Observer Research Foundation. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means without permission in writing from ORF.

Attribution: *The Arabian Sea Dialogue: Connect. Create. Collaborate*, March 2023, Observer Research Foundation.

Observer Research Foundation
20 Rouse Avenue, Institutional Area
New Delhi 110002
India
contactus@orfonline.org
www.orfonline.org

Design & Layout: Rahil Miya Shaikh





CONTENTS

ABOUT THE ARABIAN SEA DIALOGUE **7**

FOREWORDS **10**

Jaibal Naduvath

Amb. Navdeep Suri

KEYNOTES AND SPECIAL ADDRESSES **15**

Thani bin Ahmed Al Zeyoudi

Lujaina Mohsin Darwish

Harsh Vardhan Shringla

Pankaj Khimji

Vice Admiral Ajendra Bahadur Singh

Sheikh Humaid bin Ali Al Maani

Gopichand P Hinduja



PANEL DISCUSSIONS AND PERSPECTIVES

33

Panel discussion

India-GCC Collaboration: New Alignments, New Opportunities

Panel discussion

Decoding the New Security Paradigm

Panel discussion

India, GCC and the G20: New Opportunities, New Possibilities

Panel discussion

'Trade with Trust': India and the GCC

Perspectives

A Sea of Opportunity

Panel discussion

Changing Priorities in the Era of the Green Transition

Panel discussion

Green Mobility: 'Driving' the race to net zero

Panel discussion

Leveraging the India-Gulf Relationship for Climate Finance

Perspectives

An Isthmus of Ideas

Panel discussion

Making Arabian Sea Community the Global Innovation Hub

Panel discussion

Women Leadership In the Fourth Industrial Revolution

Perspectives

The 'Y' Factor: Towards Shaping a Common Arabian Sea Destiny

Perspectives

Emerging Architectures

Valedictory Session

Towards a Shared, Prosperous Future

ABOUT THE REPPORTEURS

81

CONFERENCE AGENDA

83





ABOUT THE ARABIAN SEA DIALOGUE

The historical ties between India and the Gulf region are witnessing an evolutionary change, transcending the traditional economic interests of trade, energy, and employment. The multitude of geopolitical developments within and outside the region are also reshaping the Gulf's engagement with India and the world.

The pandemic and the heightened geopolitical uncertainty have led to tumult—countries are exploring avenues to transform the crisis into opportunity spurring digital transformation and reconfiguration of supply chains at an unprecedented pace and manner. It has also led to the reimagination and reorganisation of partnerships, such as the I2U2, Quad, and AUKUS, as countries work towards greater synergy and enhanced cooperation.

Given their shared interests, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and India are reenergising and revitalising their historical connections, imparting an unprecedented impetus to the partnership. The renewed dynamism in India-GCC relations has presented an opportunity for India and the GCC countries to engage better for more significant mutual benefit and greater global good.

This scenario forms the backdrop of the 2022 edition of the Arabian Sea Dialogue. The Dialogue brings together policymakers, business leaders, civil society, and the youth of the region to deliberate on a blueprint for an 'Arabian Sea Community' to shape and reinvigorate the vibrance, passion, and potential among the peoples of India and the Gulf—provided, nourished, and united by our shared connection, the Arabian Sea.



Geopolitics and Security: New Floats on the Global Chessboard

West Asia is not new to geopolitical upheavals and great-power rivalries. From the oil age of the mid-20th century turning the region into a fulcrum of global power and influence, to the Gulf War in 1991 and the Iraq war in 2001, this region has been critical to international politics and economics, particularly so for western foreign policy. However, recent developments are shaping new security dynamics in the region. The Gulf states are hedging their bets: China is the new power player on the block; the Russia-Ukraine war has further pushed the idea of 'strategic autonomy'; and struggles of some deals, such as the JCPOA, and the success of others, such as the Abraham Accords, represent the changing political paradigm in a historically fraught geography. Meanwhile, external major powers are reassessing their priorities. How are the GCC states responding to this new security environment? What fundamentals have the Abraham Accords altered in West Asia and intra-Arab politics? What does the emerging I2U2 equation portend for the future of this region?

Beyond Traditional Economics: Expanding Investments, Financial Flows and Trade

The relationship between India and the GCC has fundamentally changed over the

last few years. There has been a significant increase in economic engagement and the setting of deeper trade and investment ties between the two regions. The recently concluded CEPA with the UAE and the highly anticipated free trade agreement with the GCC are a testament to the advancing relationship. Beyond the deepening trade links, the emergence of global value chains and supply chains has allowed the two regions to integrate further and reap the benefits of their comparative advantages. India's ascension to the G20 presidency in December 2022 also provides an opportunity to bring issues of mutual priority to the global high table. Against this backdrop, important questions arise. What are the expectations of the GCC from India's G20 presidency? How can partners reshape their economic relationship through the value chain approach? How can digital technologies be harnessed to bolster the resilience of the supply chains in the region? How can India and the GCC leverage their complementarities to create a more conducive investment environment in the region?

India-Gulf Climate Cooperation: Walking the Green Talk

Climate change is the biggest challenge facing humanity today. It will also decisively influence the global geopolitical fabric and shape the choice facing India and the GCC nations. A shared strategy to deal with the energy transition



and a renewed focus on green mobility and finance mobilisation is essential for the success of the global fight against climate change. Sustainable investment choices will also affect the region's future of jobs and growth. What guiding principles should define the evolution of India-Gulf climate cooperation? Which sectors should assume focus? How can the power of the sun be harnessed in galvanising the energy transition in India and the Gulf region? How can India-Gulf climate cooperation be manoeuvred to influence climate justice positively?

Youth, Inclusion, and Innovation

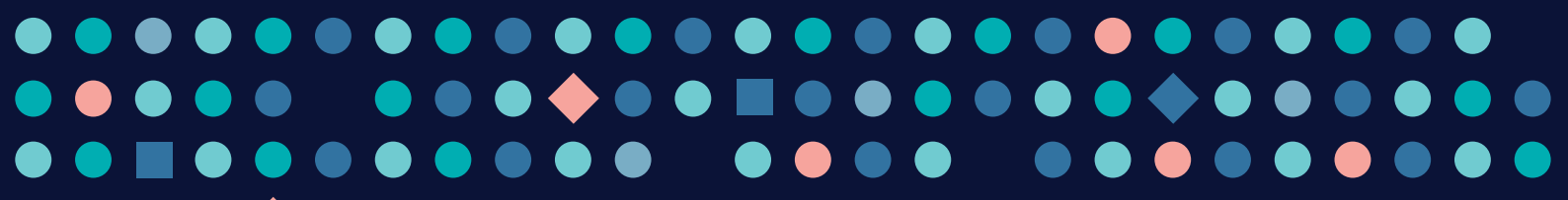
With a rich and diverse tradition of contribution through the ages to the arts, culture, mathematics, science and medicine, the transformative potential of the people of the region is immense

and well documented, with women and young thinkers often at the forefront. However, the disruption caused by colonialism upended several social structures that enabled this. As the world changes rapidly and in hugely transformative ways, how we engage, harness, and empower this constituency will determine and shape our collective future and, indeed, our aspiration to retake our rightful place as the cradle of innovation, thought and civilisational leadership. Vital questions arise from this: How should we reorient our approaches and practices to further gender equity and women's leadership? How can we leverage the tremendous youth capital of the region to secure a shared, prosperous future? What should we do to make the region a global hub of ideas, thought and innovation?





FOREWORDS



The Arabian Sea Dialogue



By

Jaibal Naduvath

Vice President and Senior Fellow, Observer Research Foundation

As we gather for the Arabian Sea Dialogue, coming as we did in the safety of modern transport across the great sea that connects us, it is also a poignant reminder of how far we have come since our forefathers traversed the Arabian Sea through wind and storm; building and solidifying trade, economic, and cultural linkages for over five millennia, starting with the Indus Valley civilisation and the Dilmun civilisation. Our gathering is as much a testament to their collective efforts as it is symbolic of our deep shared intent to connect, create, and collaborate through today's dialogue to build a prosperous future for our peoples—the Arabian Sea community which today accounts for over a third of all humanity.

Our synergy, our trust, and our commitment to the greater good are deeply ingrained in our civilisational ethos, and will enable us to not only build a beautiful future for the generations to come but also one that is inclusive and representative of the needs and aspirations of the entire world, acting for the greater common good



a our cultures so rightly teach us. The Arabian Sea Community can offer solutions to the world's problems, rooted in the sensibilities and priorities of the Global South.

Today's unique geopolitical complex--the war in Eurasia that has disrupted global supply chains and cascaded to create deep economic distress, the self-serving play by a few determined actors pushing nations into a vortex of debt, despair and despondency and the deep divides in the international community exposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, and the weaponisation of everything from pharmaceuticals to banking and

technology -are all great challenges of our times. Our coming together can bring forth new and sustainable pathways to unique, transformative solutions that bear the interest of all humanity.

Eleanor Roosevelt once said that the future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams. Delegates participation in the Arabian Sea Dialogue is a testament to that thinking and our tremendous potential to create winning solutions. Thank you for believing in that promise and for your noble determination to be the stellar exemplar of collaboration and coexistence. May our efforts and actions birth a million beautiful dreams for the good of all.

Compiled by Nutika Kale



The Arabian Sea Dialogue



By

Amb. Navdeep Suri

Distinguished Fellow, Observer Research Foundation

My last assignment to the UAE, as an ambassador, brought home something very positive but also challenging. On the positive side was the unprecedented growth of bilateral relations between India and virtually all countries in the Gulf. And yet, you could sense a disconnect. As the countries of the Gulf became richer and as India started growing, they started looking across each other to the West and the East rather than looking at each other. And so, one of the things that I had in mind was how we try and fix this gap. That is where the idea of the Arabian Sea Dialogue emerged—How do we revive our connections over the narrow stretch of water, which has always been a bridge between India and the Gulf?

The other reason for this dialogue is that we often see each other through the prism of Western media, giving us a distorted image of each other. The earlier divergences and mistrust made it that much more complicated for us to manage those relationships. For example, India often sees the Gulf as a region that is volatile, conflict-prone, or where lots of Indians go to work and send remittances. But there is so much more depth and texture to the relationship and the present trends that are shaping it. Furthermore,



the conscious effort by some of the key players in the region to control intra-regional conflicts and arrive at a degree of cooperation bodes very well for the neighbourhood countries such as India.

The second key trend is what has happened since the Abraham Accords. It has opened up possibilities for cooperation, which did not exist three years ago. India has a very close relationship with the Gulf. India also has very close relations with Israel. And so, post the Abraham Accords, we see initiatives towards trilateral cooperation through the India-Israel-UAE-US (I2U2) grouping. Our diplomacy has been fairly nimble in taking advantage of some of these new opportunities and openings, thus creating a new dynamic that did not exist.

The third trend is the growth of India, which will inevitably bring our countries closer. We have a human bridge between India and the Gulf. We also have a commercial bridge. What we are going to see increasingly is a shared security bridge. There is no question that India, as a large, stable, increasingly more capable and more interested country, is seen as a net security provider.

Despite these three emerging trends, we certainly did take our eyes off the ball for several decades. We articulated a 'Look East' policy that did wonders for our relations with the ASEAN bloc. But somewhere, we forgot that the Gulf was also our near neighbourhood. And it is only belatedly that we took up the 'Look West' and 'Act West' policy. The amount of energy that Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his team have invested in our relationship with the Gulf is unprecedented. India is demonstrating through words and actions that the Gulf is a critically important region for us. Is the Gulf ready for its own 'Look East' policy?

Indeed, there is a lot more that we can do to explore further points of engagement. I hope we can develop specific areas of convergence and engagement, particularly how to reconnect the younger generation. If, for instance, India will be one of the top three or top-four trade partners for the Gulf countries. In that scenario, what can be done to encourage young Arabs to come for internships with large Indian companies and understand India's business environment better? Let the Arabian Sea Dialogue be the starting point of a diverse range of conversations and some fundamental ideas that we can take forward.

Compiled by Nutika Kale





KEYNOTES AND SPECIAL ADDRESSES





Arabian Sea Dialogue theme signifies the future trajectory of India-GCC relations

By

Thani bin Ahmed Al Zeyoudi

Minister of State for Foreign Trade, Ministry of Economy, UAE

India and the UAE have become deeply intertwined economically, culturally, and socially. Our alliance will prove pivotal to successfully navigating our ability to the challenges ahead.

This relationship has been further strengthened by the signing of the UAE-India Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA). This landmark deal opens up a new chapter in our bilateral relations. Since it came into effect in May 2022, it has removed and reduced tariffs on more than 80 percent of product lines, removed technical barriers to trade and opened up market access for service export. We are already seeing the benefits. In the first half of 2022, our bilateral trade increased by 20 percent over the same period in 2021. It is now on course to surpass US\$55 billion, US\$12 billion more than in 2021, and



well on course to achieve the US\$100 billion target by 2030. These results are a clear validation of our shared vision.

The UAE-India CEPA also underlines the theme of this year's Arabian Sea Dialogue—'Connect, Create, Collaborate'—which signifies the essence of our agreement. It is not simply a trade deal. It is a framework for creating a host of new opportunities for our businesses, entrepreneurs, and investors. Ultimately, it is the basis for an enduring partnership, one that can spur investments and priority sectors such as renewable energy; advanced technologies and food security; establish a platform for SMEs to network, scale and expand; build connections between the governments, private sector and academia; and pioneer solutions to global challenges. We are already seeing this in action with the multibillion-dollar investments in logistic infrastructure, food corridors, solar parks, telecoms, and pharmaceuticals. This cooperation is a vital component of our new economic agenda, one that seeks to respond to the challenges of the post-pandemic world and reimagine our economies for the next 30 years. We understand that stronger, deeper ties with strategic allies around the world are vital to securing supply chains, accelerating investment flows, and fostering the industries of the future. India

was a natural first partner in this effort. Not only do we share 50 years of history, signified by the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1972, but we also share a common future.

The world's economic map is shifting from the West to the East. India is on track to establish itself as a new centre of trade, technology, energy, and agriculture. This shift signifies Asia's future—a youthful, ambitious, technologically-driven, resourceful region. The UAE-India relationship can potentially lead the world in harnessing new approaches to climate change and sustainability. The multimillion-dollar renewable energy projects in Gujarat clearly indicate that our net-zero commitments can be a wellspring of long-term wealth creation. We combine new means of food production, storage, and delivery, ensuring our readiness to face future shocks to the global trading systems. We can collaborate on pharmaceutical development, distribution, and on new wellness and health care approaches. We can establish a digital infrastructure to empower new industries based on the Fourth Industrial Revolution. These possibilities signify the trajectory of the India-UAE partnership, and we will expand every effort to maximise this potential in the months and years ahead.

Compiled by Nutika Kale



Arabian Sea Dialogue



Oman-India relationship can be pivotal for enhanced India-GCC cooperation

By

Lujaina Mohsin Darwish

Chairperson, Mohsin Haider Darwish LLC - ITICS; Member, Majlis A'Dawla (Oman State Council); Chairperson, India-Oman Friendship Society

Like India, Oman is a land of peace, tradition, inclusion, deep-rooted culture, and proud heritage. Oman's ties with India go back several centuries—the first contact between the two countries can be traced back 5,000 years. Oman is home to a significant Indian population who proudly call it their second home. Omanis are familiar with Indian culture, thanks to the large Indian community in Oman and its geographical proximity. The Sultanate of Oman has long been a strategic partner of India and an important mediator at the GCC, Arab League, and Indian Ocean Rim Association. Oman was the first GCC country with which India established a strong defence and security



cooperation mechanism. In recent years, New Delhi and Muscat have cooperated in ensuring maritime security in the Indian Ocean region. The Royal Navy of Oman partners with the Indian Navy's anti-piracy mission to protect trading routes along the Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf. The test of any relationship is always times of duress, and the bond between our two nations has been strengthened with mutual agreement. The Oman government worked in close coordination with its Indian counterpart to provide the return of Indian nationals through the Vande Bharat mission.

India and Oman have a strong economic relationship. Bilateral trade between the two countries grew from US\$5.4 billion in 2020-21 to US\$9.988 billion in 2021-22. India is Oman's second-largest market for crude oil exports. It is also the fourth-largest market for Oman's non-oil exports in 2022. Investment flows between the two nations have been strong, reflected in the numerous joint ventures established both in India and Oman. There are over 6,000 India-Oman joint venture companies in the Sultanate of Oman, with an estimated investment of over US\$7.5 billion. Indian companies are leading investors in Oman's Sohar, Salalah and Duqm free economic zones. The proximity and connectivity of the two countries offer an opportunity to enhance bilateral trade further. As one of the key players in the India-GCC framework, Oman will play an important role in framing and implementing policies over the next few years.

Heritage and trade ties between India and Oman go back to Dilmun and Indus Valley civilisations. The Gulf countries united under the GCC umbrella, and India has emerged as crucial strategic economic and cultural partners. However, the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic across the world, did not leave the partners untouched. Economies shrunk significantly, leaving a wake of setbacks. Faster vaccination rates, early prevention strategies, increased consumer demand across categories and comprehensive economic booster plans have put us on the path of recovery. However, attaining pre-pandemic levels in economies will take time for both sides. There will be a clear synergy between India and GCC countries combining their traditional areas of cooperation, energy, trade, and investment. This cooperation will need an integrated approach backed by proper support to develop ties in the diverse sectors, including energy, water, food security, digital technology, and skills development.

Given the grave implications of climate change, enhancing climate cooperation between India and the Gulf countries is an immediate concern. Green hydrogen is expected to emerge as the fuel of the future due to its sustainable nature. Oman offers essential resources to produce green hydrogen, including solar and wind energy. Green power will see enhanced cooperation between India and Oman. ACME India Ltd is investing US\$2.5 billion to manufacture green ammonia and green hydrogen in Oman. The



manufacturing facility will be in Duqm and supply green ammonia to Europe, the Americas, and Asia.

From a broad historical perspective, the pandemic has been a watershed event. From destruction, it created new socioeconomic and diplomatic structures. It has also offered opportunities to take

the human story into new areas that need new thinking, ideas, and mindsets. Given the five millennia-old narratives of engagement that have defined India's links with Oman and the wider GCC region, the pandemic has opened opportunities to reinvent our connections on a new basis, as we have been doing over several centuries.

Compiled by Nutika Kale



Arabian Sea Dialogue



Synergising India-GCC strengths for global peace, stability, and sustainability

By

Harsh Vardhan Shringla

India's Chief G20 Coordinator; Former Foreign Secretary, India

The world is currently in some measure of flux and uncertainty. The COVID-19 pandemic was the greatest shock to the international system since the Second World War. We also have, in the post-pandemic era, the Ukraine conflict. In some sense, this conflict demonstrates how interconnected the world has become because this is a conflict far away in Europe, and yet it directly impacts us, whether we are in the Gulf or India. It is a conflict that we are not contributing to, and yet it has its implications. Third is the impact of climate change, which we all feel, whether in the Gulf region, the subcontinent, or anywhere in the world.



In recent years, India and the GCC countries have developed even deeper ties, evident through policies such as 'Act East, Look West', the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement with the UAE, and the development of multilateral arrangements such as the I2U2. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi being conferred the highest civilian award by UAE and Saudi Arabia, among others, and his visits to three gulf countries nine times since his election to the office of the prime minister, signal the nuanced relationship between the countries, which has deepened even further during the pandemic.

During the pandemic, while the Gulf countries provided help and support to Indians on their soil, India ensured the supply of food, medicines, and essentials, thus strengthening supply chains more than ever. The export of 5.5 million vaccine doses, the presence of Indian personnel in Gulf countries, the deployment of rapid response teams to build capacity in Gulf nations, and the supply of immediate liquid medical oxygen by Gulf nations helped create an empowered health partnership. Analysing these developments is crucial in understanding the depth of the relationship between the two sides, but more importantly, in imagining a future with a unique partnership.

As the world emerged from the pandemic, India fared comparatively well, primarily due to a resilient economy, strong science and technology fundamentals, and, most importantly, sound policies and decisions by the leadership and the government. But

as we move forward, we see that there are not just domestic issues that we must contend with but also global challenges.

When we look at global challenges, we find that we are in a situation where countries need to come together to contribute to resolving many of these issues. In December 2022, India held the presidencies of global and regional organisations—the G20, the UN Security Council, and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation. These global leadership roles provide us with a unique opportunity to present our narrative to the world and offer solutions to global challenges based on our experiences and achievements in the fields of digital transformations, renewable energy, agriculture, and food security.

On the domestic front, India is going through a very critical phase. In August 2022, we commemorated the 75th anniversary of our Independence. The next 25 years in the run-up to our 100th anniversary will be critical to how we shape our nation to meet our domestic and global aspirations and ambitions. We also see this phase as 'Amrit Kal', a period of great focus and concentration on our ambitions to become a developed country by 2047. Today, we have crossed the three trillion-dollar mark in terms of GDP. We have become the fifth-largest economy in the world. We are looking again to regain the momentum of a fast growth track that will keep us on track to achieve our target of trillion dollars more, not only in terms of GDP growth, but we are also looking at inclusive, sustainable growth to



carry every part of our population with us. Therefore, India's Amrit Kaal will be crucial for its development. And so, planning and envisioning for the next 25 years is of prime importance.

India and the GCC need to connect, create, and collaborate in specific fields to realise the potential of their ties holistically. Trade and investment, climate change, youth and employment, and defence and security are the fulcra of India-GCC ties. Raising the level of institutional dialogue with the GCC countries to the levels of the heads of state and governments will aid in focusing towards a more equitable outreach. Moreover, it can also aid in collaborating on ecological and other socioeconomic issues such as climate change and employment. Both sides need to take significant steps to mitigate climate change. Tech and further research and development collaborations could prove very useful in this aspect.

While envisioning a shared future for the youth of India and GCC, India can take the lead, owing to its demographic dividend

and a rigorous culture of developing startups and unicorns. Growth in trade and investments can also harness all these developments. The dividends coming into Gulf countries through sovereign wealth funds can be invested in Indian capabilities for mutual benefit. Moreover, collaborations in the field of defence and security need to be developed with increased research and development and a mutual understanding of security needs.

Thus, the developments in the next few years will be crucial for both India and the GCC as we write a new chapter of collaboration, appreciating our historical ties and looking ahead to exploring opportunities while tackling global challenges.

We must synchronise these energies to contribute to global solutions and develop a blueprint to take us to the middle of this century.

Compiled by Nutika Kale and Radhika Sareen



Arabian Sea Dialogue



Time to revive historic India-GCC connections to 'Connect, Create, Collaborate' for global good

By

Pankaj Khimji

Advisor, Foreign Trade and International Cooperation, Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, Oman; Director, Khimji Ramdas Group; Chairperson, Oman Cricket

It is an appropriate moment that we start aligning ourselves as the region goes through a distortion of seismic proportions in terms of what is happening in the economy of energy or the energy of the economy. West Asia, especially the Arabian peninsula, has a crucial role in energy economics, at least for the next decade, as we try to reduce the value of our energy and start reinventing new green hydrogen and green energy of the future. Green fuels are an areas that Oman is going to focus on and one of the areas that India wants to work closely on with the region, not just Oman but also with the neighbouring countries as well.



But when we look at all this, we need to remember a few things that are of significance. Right up to the 1970s and part of the 1980s, there was a huge connection between the trading communities of West Asia and India. There was an absolute social and cultural connectivity that transcended all barriers. From the mid-1980s until now, the next generation has gone further West or Far East, all the way up to Australia. What has happened to the Indian subcontinent and the Gulf peninsula? There has been a rift in social and cultural connections, which needs to be addressed. And as we go forward, we must look back and address the gap. How we do that is up to us.

Food security is important, and India, after 75 years of Independence, is now exporting grains and greens. West Asia is a net importer of grains and greens, and will remain so, at least for a few decades. The I2U2 has been set up to address food security. We are happy that we have India as our partner to look after us even during the pandemic. India was one of the first nations to send COVID-19 medicines to us. Secondly, when embargoes happened from certain countries, India was again one of the first to send a shipment in a week. We want to thank India for this support.

As we advance, it is not about what happens in emergencies but what we will do to share abilities to produce and harness our knowledge to grow things. We talk about lands, and we talk about connections. The most important thing that we share is the seas. Over the last 75 years, there has never been a year where the Indian Navy has not connected with Oman, which proves our strong connections. Water will be a significant source of the economy. The development of fisheries and fish and water resources will be critical. As the world moves away from traditional red meat towards white meat, the sea will be another source of income and economy for both the nations. We need to look at that jointly.

Former Indian President Dr. Abdul Kalam had said that imparting education is the best form of charity. I am so happy to see that the Indian Institute of Technology will go to the UAE, our neighboring country. this will be a game-changer. It is significant that India has started exporting its best institutions, its know-how, and ability to harness education. . Let us keep this dialogue going forward, and I hope that through the continued interaction and the meeting of people, we will make it happen.

Compiled by Nutika Kale



the Arabian Sea Dialogue



A multi-layered mechanism for regional maritime security

By

Vice Admiral Ajendra Bahadur Singh

*PVSM, AVSM, VSM, ADC, Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief,
Western Naval Command, Indian Navy*

Gulf countries and India have a long history of engagement. The region has witnessed new alignments and opportunities in last decade. The withdrawal of the US forces from Afghanistan has created some amount of anxiety and instability. It will take time to settle down. The ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict is shaping global geopolitics and geoeconomics and adding to the commotion. It has disrupted supply chains and increased the price of hydrocarbons, especially in Europe. Besides, China has become more assertive and hegemonic in the South China Sea and the Himalayas. Israel and the Gulf countries have witnessed welcome rapprochement with the signing of the Abraham Accords.



The Gulf countries are primarily dependent on the export of hydrocarbons via maritime routes, and any disruption of these sea lines will have a tremendous impact on energy security and economies of most nations. For example, 90 percent of India's trade happens through the sea routes, increasingly facing challenges such as maritime terrorism, piracy, armed robbery, and human and narcotics trafficking. In addition, illegal fishing has created the problem of food security in the region.

Addressing all these challenges will require a multi-layered mechanism between the GCC and India through enhanced cooperation, collaboration, and debate. New Delhi's initiatives in this regard are aimed at promoting inclusive growth, security, and harmony in the region.

The Indian Navy already shares critical information with some GCC countries for the security of the region. However, given the vastness of the oceans, there should be a multilateral cooperation between GCC and India that will make the oceans peaceful.

Given the vastness of the maritime domain, individual countries cannot do it alone. Piracy in Bab-el-Mandeb, Horn of Africa, is affecting the whole Arabian Sea region, Iran, and the oil and energy trade. Furthermore, non-state actors, such as the Houthis in Yemen, pose another challenge to maritime security. Therefore, countries in the region should work together to find solutions to these problems. Collective security is vital for the entire Arabian Sea region.

Compiled by Ayjaz Wani





Oman is a key cog in India-GCC partnership

By

Sheikh Humaid bin Ali Al Maani

Head, Global Affairs Department, Foreign Ministry of Oman

As an Omani who has spent time in India, it is a pleasure to see dialogue not only between policymakers, intellectuals, and businesses but also among the people. This is exactly what we need.

Oman has a long history with India, dating back several millennia when Indian sailors, merchants, and people of faith travelled the Arabian Sea and Oman Sea exchanging skills, goods, and ideas. Today, our relationship has taken on a multidimensional character that has proven the reliability and confidence of both sides. It is worth noting that Oman was the first gateway to the Arabian Sea, with which the Indian military has conducted joint exercises. Our strong defence and security partnership, with a special focus on



maritime security, has been valuable and constructive.

In recent years, Oman and India have cooperated to ensure maritime security, and I hope our robust defence cooperation can match our economic relations. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has given us a different perspective on how India and the Gulf countries can shape the post-pandemic era. Economic recovery will provide a fresh look at the ongoing trends of relations between the two sides.

The clear preference for clean energy and the availability of skilled manpower, and the importance of connectivity, both physical and digital, will help shape a new regional value chain. As the population in the Gulf countries increases, water conservation will become an area of cooperation between India and the GCC to sustain a better quality of life over the long term. Both regions are facing water stress, and climate change should also be an issue of importance to both sides. At the same time, food security is also a significant concern for the region. In 2007-2008, when global food prices

increased by 217 percent, many countries in the region reconsidered their agriculture and food security policies. There is a clear synergy between the GCC countries and India in consolidating deeper cooperation through investments in education and healthcare. Digital technology is playing a central role in society's post-oil future in the GCC countries, and India is a credible partner in developing digital institutions through local institutions and universities.

It is worth noting that the Gulf states have 53 zones, many of which focus on commerce and technological ventures. Hence, virtual commercial zones will be of great interest to the region, and the port of Duqm is one of them. Despite the differing perceptions of threats in the area between all partners, the ability of Gulf countries and India to overcome challenges and establish a new diversified framework for their relations, such as a free trade formula, is commendable.

Given Oman's historical connectivity and its importance today with other GCC partnerships, it is committed to deepen such engagement with India for partnership and peaceful existence in our region.

Compiled by Samridhhi Diwan





Greater India-GCC partnership will offer new, viable solutions to global challenges

By
Gopichand P Hinduja
Co-Chairman, Hinduja Group

The Arabian Sea Dialogue is an important forum for discussing emerging challenges and seeking new partnerships and collaborations between India and the GCC. The Hinduja Group's growth and global expansion have their origins in this region. I first visited Dubai and the surrounding area when I was just 18 years old, over 60 years ago. Back then, all I could see was sand, but now the transformation is truly amazing. My father founded the Hinduja Group over 100 years ago, in the backdrop of the recession created in the Indian textile industry due to the First World War and the Spanish flu pandemic. He travelled to Iran and Iraq to discover new markets because he believed that the world is a bond and did not believe in force majeure.



My father broke the Jewish textile cartel there, set up a supply chain, and expanded his trading operations. He traded from Japan to Europe from his Indian and West Asian headquarters. The growth and expansion of the Hinduja Group were largely due to its business success in the Arabian Sea community. My elder brother and I joined the business in West Asia, and the Hinduja family business remained headquartered in Iran until the Islamic Revolution.

Today, we are a multinational group with a global footprint in over 40 countries and 11 verticals, and the Gulf remains an important investment hub for us. We manage many of our global investments from Dubai, and Ashok Leyland has an assembly plant in Ras al Khaimah. In the 100 years we have been in the Gulf, we have seen opportunity after opportunity present itself. The GCC is emerging as a very important commercial hub and will certainly dominate the geopolitical and global economic space. This has further strengthened in recent times with an increase in India's economic linkage with the GCC, especially due to the growth in oil and energy imports.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, vaccines and medicines manufactured in India played a critical role in the GCC countries' efforts to combat COVID-19. Approximately 8 percent of India's vaccine exports went to GCC countries.

Compiled by Samridhi Diwan

The unique geopolitical setting and reordering of global power relations today offer an opportunity for India and the GCC countries to become a global voice of change and can transform millions of lives. India's presidency of the G20 offers an opportunity for the most marginalised voices to be heard. India and the GCC must collaborate and create an inclusive global institutional and governance framework. We need to reimagine our role in the global order and how we can integrate better and improve economic benefits for our people.

Over half of the population of the two regions comprises youth, and we must seek their vibrancy and passion. They are the drivers of change who can create a new, more prosperous future. And there is a lot of potential to tap into.

However, challenges remain, particularly around climate change, energy, food, and security. How our regions respond to these challenges will influence and shape the global narrative and choices. A shared strategy leveraging each other's strengths will help us deal with the transition towards renewable energy, food security, and education and skill development, as well as emerging security challenges. A greater India-GCC partnership will offer new and more viable alternative solutions to global challenges. We have the opportunity to move towards greater inclusivity and a fairer global order. The conference theme—'Connect, Collaborate, and Create'—shows our shared intent and roadmap for the future.





PANEL REPORTS AND PERSPECTIVES





Panel discussion

India-GCC Collaboration: New alignments, new opportunities

Speakers:

- **Pankaj Khimji**, Advisor, Foreign Trade and International Cooperation, Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, Oman; Director, Khimji Ramdas Group; Chairperson, Oman Cricket
- **Vice Admiral Girish Luthra (Retd.)**, PVSM, AVSM, VSM, ADC, Former Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Southern and Western Naval Commands, Indian Navy; Distinguished Fellow, Observer Research Foundation, India
- **Staff Colonel Pilot Adel Binsanqoor (Retd.)**, Acting Director of Strategic Study and Scientific Research Division, The Emirates Centre for Strategic Studies and Research, UAE
- **Sultan Barakat**, Founding Director, Center for Conflict and Humanitarian Studies, Doha Institute, Hamad Bin Khalifa University, Qatar
- **Abdullah Baabood**, State of Qatar Chair for Islamic Area Studies, Waseda University, Japan

Moderator: **Shamika Ravi**, Vice President, Economic Policy, Observer Research Foundation, India





The India-GCC dynamic over the past decade has been an undeniable success story, perhaps to the surprise of many. While historically, energy security and labour have been the driving areas of debate and cooperation between the two regions, both transactional in nature, India's relations with GCC have moved to a much more fundamental view and aims of mutual economic growth.

While highlighting the great strides made by the two regions, the panellists also brought to the forefront the challenges. They also discussed more fundamental challenges, such as a movement of global energy security paradigm from hydrocarbons to renewables, technologies

becoming a central tenet of how states view security, and the future of economic growth in both these parts of the world, specifically around issues such as the new I2U2 'minilateral' formed between India, Israel, US and the UAE. The India-GCC bilateral and multilateral engagements still lack a sufficient level of contact.

Newer issues, such as food security, also commanded significant attention when discussing the future of security in India and the GCC states, exacerbated by the conflict in Ukraine and bigger challenges, such as climate change. The discussion highlighted the "globalist" nature of food, and how it has raised questions about food security and impacted societal patterns



of overconsumption and waste, which are important issues to tackle along with systemic challenges such as economic inequality. Other related issues, such as water security, are already seen by analysts as a significant economic, political, and societal strain in an era of erratic climate events, leading to regional conflicts over critical natural resources for domestic consumption and use.

Underlying the above challenges, the panellists consented to geopolitical events as harbingers of how well groups such as the I2U2 would eventually work. Although India and the GCC states have established good public diplomacy over the past few years, there remains a deep sense of missed opportunities. The panellists highlighted that business is still debated

mainly with the 'Far East', namely China and Japan, despite the significant changes in the India-GCC dynamic.

The radical changes brought by the signing of the Abraham Accords in 2020, leading to the creation of the I2U2, remained an area of both optimism and pessimism. The panel highlighted India's increased outreach to the Gulf, particularly the UAE and Israel, as a potential departure from its long-standing neutrality over regional geopolitics in West Asia. Does such a stance—from India and others, including some GCC members and Israel—add or subtract from the possibility of future geopolitical conflicts?

Ultimately, the panellists consented that the Arabian Sea is a body of water that does not separate but unites the two regions.

Compiled by Kabir Taneja

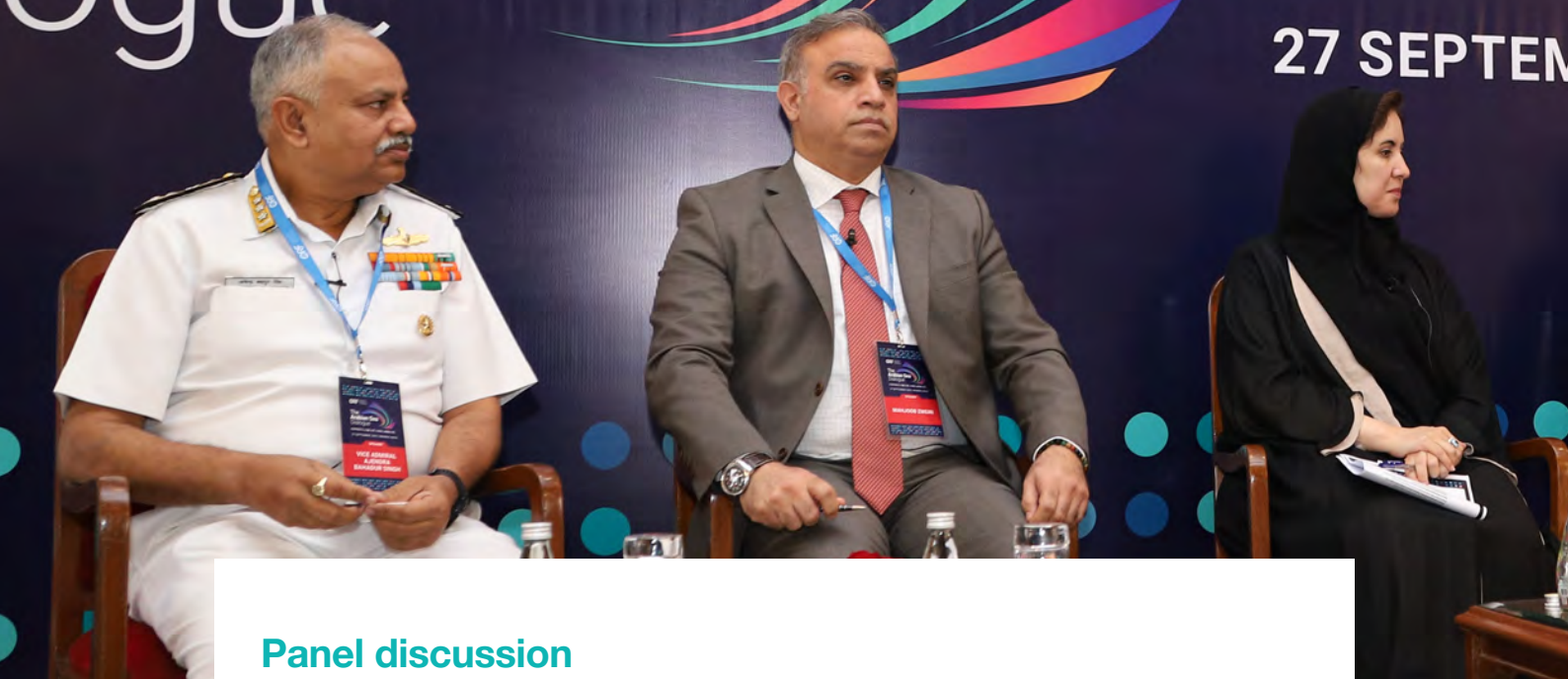




Arabian Sea Dialogue

CONNECT

27 SEPTEMBER



Panel discussion

Decoding the new security paradigm

Speakers:

- **Vice Admiral Ajendra Bahadur Singh**, PVSM, AVSM, VSM, ADC, Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Western Naval Command, Indian Navy
- **Sultan Barakat**, Founding Director, Center for Conflict and Humanitarian Studies, Doha Institute, Hamad Bin Khalifa University, Qatar
- **Shaikha Najla Mohamed Salem Alqasimi**, Director, Global Affairs Department, B'huth (Dubai Public Policy Research Centre); Former UAE ambassador
- **Rajeswari Rajagopalan**, Director, Centre for Security, Strategy and Technology, Observer Research Foundation, India
- **Mahjoob Zweiri**, Director, Gulf Studies Centre, Qatar University, Qatar

Moderator: **Harsh V Pant**, Vice President, Studies and Foreign Policy, Observer Research Foundation, India





The level of uncertainty around the globe, symbolised by the Russia-Ukraine war, is overshadowing the security and stability in the Arabian Sea. The prevailing uncertainty calls for the world to focus on and measure things based on human needs. Maritime security is also vital in the Arabian Sea for international trade. However, two main choke points, the Strait of Hormuz and Bab-al-Mandeb, require more security. The region lacks the level of cooperation to address problems such as weapons smuggling, human trafficking, and illegal fishing, which affect the entire region.

The US's geopolitical and geoeconomic interests in the region are dwindling, as it focuses on the rising Chinese influence in

the eastern Indian Ocean, the panellists noted. No longer dependent on the hydrocarbons of the Gulf, the US has also withdrawn its forces from Afghanistan. But it still provides core security to Israel. In that sense, the US will continue its footprint in this region. These circumstances offer opportunities for India and the GCC to cooperate on security, joint defence, and production. However, such cooperation will require India to step up its competitiveness. India and the GCC need to collaborate in emerging technology areas, such as artificial intelligence (AI), automation and cybersecurity, which need rules as in the traditional security domain. The two regions must lead in establishing global rules for AI and its enormous disruptions.



As GCC member states and India are coastal countries, maritime security will remain unaddressed without confronting climate change risks. There is a dire need to build capacity in the Arabian Sea. There is a need for small groupings, such as the I2I2, to have a common minimum programme for food security, fishing, and shipbuilding.

Furthermore, West Asia cannot remain immune to great power politics. China was generally restricted to the Indo-Pacific but is expanding its maritime influence to increasingly wider geographies. Beijing's growing influence has brought the region into direct competition with the US. Strategic convergences exist between India and the US in managing a belligerent China, but divergent perceptions and interests also pull both partners. India-GCC cooperation can provide the 'web of partnerships' with other like-minded countries to contain and manage China's aggressive behaviour. Besides maritime compulsions, India and the GCC must also cooperate in space.

The panellists consented that both sides should analyse regional peace objectives

and build their individual and collective capacities, as the major powers will approach them for their convenience. They will end up in a mess if they continue relying on major powers for solutions to regional problems, they asserted. For example, Yemen and Somalia have become failed states unable to assert their rights globally.

All GCC countries depend on the US security guarantee, and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future. There is room to enhance the security cooperation between India and the GCC countries to strengthen the India-Gulf strategic corridor. India can play a significant role in creating alternative regional security mechanisms. The existing engagement needs to be taken forward on a multidimensional character with a special focus on maritime security.

India and the GCC also need to explore opportunities for mutual economic development. The Gulf and India share a 5,000-year-old history of engagement. The visionary and dynamic leadership of these countries should revive these ties for mutual growth and prosperity.

Compiled by Ayjaz Wani





Panel discussion

India, GCC and the G20: New Opportunities, New Possibilities

Speakers:

- **Harsh Vardhan Shringla**, India's Chief G20 Coordinator; Former Foreign Secretary, India
- **Belkacem Laabas**, Senior Advisor and Chairman of the Advisory and Institutional Support Committee, Arab Planning Institute, Kuwait
- **Shaikha Najla Mohamed Salem Alqasimi**, Director, Global Affairs Department, B'huth (Dubai Public Policy Research Centre); Former UAE ambassador
- **Mansour Almarzoqi**, Director, Centre for Strategic Studies, Prince Saud Al-Faisal Institute for Diplomatic Studies, Saudi Arabia
- **Shivali Lawale**, Director, Symbiosis School of International Studies, India
- **Mihir Sharma**, Director, Centre for Economy and Growth Programme, Observer Research Foundation, India

Moderator: **Jyoti Malhotra**, Senior Consulting Editor, *The Print*, India





India's G20 presidency comes at an exciting time in international affairs. The ongoing polycrisis—stemming from the economic slowdown as an aftereffect of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ukraine war, which has snowballed into an energy crisis in Europe, and fiscal emergencies in various parts of the world—is causing anxiety in international relations. Overcoming debt traps, currency overruns, climate shocks, and fiscal emergencies are vital for building global economic resilience. India and the GCC have a critical role to play in this endeavour.

Highlighting the need for closer cooperation between India and the GCC at this juncture, Amb. Harsh Vardhan Shringla, India's Chief G20 Coordinator, pointed out that the UAE and Oman are

guest participants in the G20 under India's presidency, in addition to Saudi Arabia being a member. The G20 will thus have unprecedented participation from the GCC countries in its meetings in India. India is also seeking partnerships with like-minded G20 nations. The G20, though a heterogenous grouping, also represents different ideologies. It is essential for us to bridge the divide between developed and developing nations and create solutions to global challenges based on the experiences of developing countries. Closer India-GCC ties are crucial to this end.

What commitments can the G20 make to ensure food supplies to the developing world? Belkacem Laabas noted that we must first acknowledge the challenges



facing the G20 in this turbulent world. The world, he said, is facing a '3F' crisis of 'food', 'fuel', and 'finance', exacerbated by the war in Ukraine. The G20 has most of the world's major food producers, including Russia, India, and Brazil (all three developing countries), and so can play a role in resolving this crisis. He also noted that as partners, the GCC and India must have two layers of coordination: a formal bilateral track to finalise the long-pending free trade agreement; and one to tackle new issues, such as climate change and the inevitable green transition.

There is nothing wrong with apparent gaps in our relations because, as developing countries, we must look inward to grow. Even as a new generation builds ties, we must find new opportunities for them, Shaikha Najla Mohamed Salem Alqasimi said. India and GCC must also explore cooperation on all aspects of the blue economy. It involves the environment, research and development (R&D), and even strategic security. R&D needs to

be inclusive and have utility. These areas need a lot of cooperation and coordination between India and the GCC.

An important commonality between the GCC and India is the youth population. Growth should not be the only measure of development. Shivali Lawale pointed out that from a GDP-driven model, the focus must shift to inclusive development for future generations.

The purpose of the G20, the panellists agreed, is to overcome transitory geopolitical tensions. The G20 remains the only forum where countries from different ideologies can sit at a common table and find policy solutions to their mutual problems. The GCC has proved itself on this count in the past decade or so, and the G20 must learn from it.

The GCC-India partnership is crucial to get voices outside the G20 into the policymaking process. This partnership is essential given the two G20 priority areas of food and fuel.

Compiled by Jhanvi Tripathi



Sea
e

CONNECT. CREATE. COLLABORATE.

27 SEPTEMBER, 2022 | MUMBAI, INDIA

BILL & MELINDA
GATES



HARSH VARDHAN
SHRINGLA

BELKACEM
LAABAS

the Arabian Sea Dialogue

CONN

27 SEPT



Panel discussion

‘Trade with Trust’: India and the GCC

Speakers:

- **Walid Abdmoula**, Economic Advisor and Deputy Director General, Arab Planning Institute, Kuwait
- **Arun Raste**, Managing Director and CEO, National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange (NCDEX), India
- **Abdullah Baabood**, State of Qatar Chair for Islamic Area Studies, Waseda University, Japan
- **Shubhada Rao**, Founder, QuantEco Research, India
- **Chandrima Sinha**, Vice President, Invest India, National Investment Promotion and Facilitation Agency, Government of India

Moderator: **Reaven Gerrad D’Souza**, Managing Editor, *The Times* Kuwait



ECT. CREATE. COLLABORATE

NOVEMBER, 2022 | MUMBAI, INDIA



The panel discussion focused on the economic cooperation between India and the GCC countries and the challenges that have impeded the expansion of trade and investment between the two regions. Walid Abdmoulah discussed the longstanding tradition of trade between India and the GCC, noting that, in 2022, India exported US\$44 billion to the GCC countries while importing around US\$110 billion. He highlighted several issues that have hindered the growth of trade between the two regions, including the fact that free trade agreements often only cover goods and not services, differences in tariff rates, and the reluctance of GCC countries to sign such deals. He also mentioned the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on global supply chains, and noted that it has

led to a call for self-sufficiency and regional collaboration. However, India and the GCC must design new ways to build productive capacity and shorten distances in value chains.

Arun Raste discussed the challenges and opportunities for trade in agricultural products between India and the GCC countries. He noted that in times of crisis, such as during the COVID-19 pandemic, governments tend to prioritise their domestic food security and may restrict exports of certain commodities. However, he pointed out that India is a food surplus country with the potential to increase its milk production in the coming decades to meet domestic and international demand. He suggested that India and the GCC countries could collaborate in the

long term to establish a supply of certain food products for the next 30 to 50 years, with investments in food parks focused on meeting the quality and standards required for exports. He also emphasised the importance of considering environmental, social, and governance factors in these trade relationships.

Abdullah Baabood discussed the historical, geographical and societal connections between India and the Gulf states. He stated that the economic and trade ties between the two sides have not met expectations, and that structural impediments within India, such as laws and regulations, made it difficult for small- and medium-sized investors to invest in the country. He also suggested that the Gulf states had not done enough to communicate the investment opportunities available in the region to the Indian community. Both sides will need to make changes to improve the relationship, with India opening its markets and becoming more transparent to attract investment. The Gulf states, Baabood noted, are trying to diversify their economies and become more industrial. India could aid these efforts by exchanging knowledge and establishing joint ventures and other partnerships. He also emphasised the importance of sustainability in the relationship between India and the Gulf states rather than short-term policies.

Shubhada Rao discussed food security issues and the problems of depending on specific countries or regions to supply

essential goods and resources. She suggested that the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine conflict has highlighted the need for greater self-sufficiency and for countries to prioritise their economic interests. India, she said, has taken a proactive approach to regional leadership and has reached out to other countries and regions, being seen as an attractive economic partner due to its large market of 1.4 billion people. India and the GCC could look at each other as a source of economic prosperity and partnership, she noted.

Chandrima Sinha discussed the expanding focus of the strategic partnership between India and the GCC beyond agriculture, food security, and energy security. She noted that GCC investors are interested in Indian startups, particularly in areas such as fintech and health tech, and there is great potential for these startups to expand into the GCC and North Africa. The Indian government has made efforts to develop the country as a hub for global manufacturing and to improve logistics infrastructure to facilitate trade with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations region. She suggested that India had a role in supporting the transition of GCC economies from oil-based to knowledge- and innovation-based through the export of education and health services. As India focuses on strengthening its relationship with the GCC, increased investment is expected.

Compiled by Shruti Jain







Perspectives

A Sea of Opportunity

Speakers:

- **Manisha Verma**, Principal Secretary, Skills, Employment, Entrepreneurship and Innovation, Government of Maharashtra, India
- **Siddik Bakir**, Director, Oil and Gas Division, Policies and Strategic Planning, Ministry of Energy, Saudi Arabia
- **Arun Raste**, Managing Director and CEO, National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange (NCDEX), India





The historic India-Gulf ties have gained an unprecedented impetus over the last decade, with the shared expanse of the Arabian Sea proverbially providing a ‘sea of opportunities’ for the two sides to strengthen their engagement for more significant mutual benefits and the world at large.

Offering her perspectives on India-GCC relations, Manisha Verma pointed out that the framework agreement on regional economic cooperation, among other objectives, emphasises exchanging information in economic cooperation, technical expertise and training. The two sides have also identified new areas for bilateral cooperation, including food security, water, renewable energy, biotech,

skill development, electronics, digitalisation, cybersecurity, and innovation. The highlight of the India-GCC relationship was the May 2022 India-UAE Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement, paving the way for scaling-up cooperation.

She noted that liberalising the assessment and certification process of Indian workers will enhance integration and mobility. Conducting joint accreditation courses in both countries will train talented youth and serve the needs of GCC states in sectors like e-commerce, healthcare, hospitality, ports, and logistics.

Siddik Bakir highlighted that the West is decoupling from China, while the Europeans are divided over their energy and security relationship with Russia.



Thus, it is imperative for India and the GCC to find opportunities amidst these geopolitical faultlines. He added that India is a crucial partner for the GCC countries, with significant capital flows in both directions due to remittances, trade, and energy supply. He stated that with the deceleration of globalisation, regionalism and minilateralism are evolving.

Highlighting the opportunities in new and emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence, Internet of Things, edtech, fintech, and heathtech, he mentioned that the investors in the GCC are highly pragmatic about their investments; the GCC nations are evolving and a ready to invest in problem-solving technology and business ideas. India can tap into this opportunity.

Arun Raste highlighted the crucial dimension of food security and noted that agriculture contributes only about 1.2 percent to the GCC's GDP. Although the GCC region does not have soil suited for agriculture, with its investment

and India's labour, the two regions could partner with Africa, Canada, and Australia for agricultural land. The GCC's population, about 60 million now, will be 106 million by 2033, providing excellent opportunities for future India-GCC collaborations to achieve regional food security.

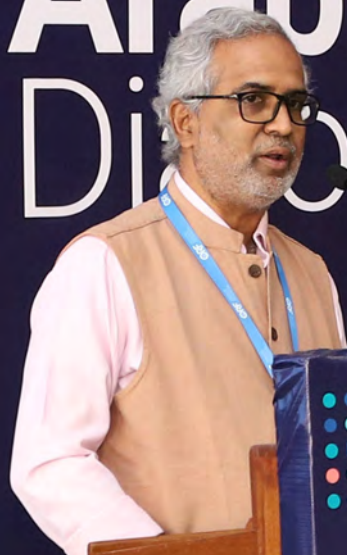
The two regions must simplify documentation by introducing e-permits and e-certificates and reduce trade barriers for the faster transfer of goods. The GCC imports about 85 percent of food primarily from the US, Europe, and India. India is the closest by shipping time and cost, and this is why it is important to reduce trade barriers.

The panel noted that much like the immensity of the Arabian Sea, there are enormous opportunities for shared learning and co-creating opportunities for the good of the people and the planet. India and the GCC must commit to this goal with concrete action, resources, and execution.

Compiled by Apoorva Lalwani



The Arabian Sea Dialogue



Perspectives

Changing priorities in the era of the green transition

Speaker:

- **Devanathan Parthasarathy**, Professor, Humanities and Social Sciences, IIT Bombay, India

Infrastructure related to ports, oil exploration, special economic zones, coastal transportation, and the blue economy are essential for human development. However, decades of research and scientific evidence show that most of this critical infrastructure is not resilient to the adverse impacts of climate change. Emerging research shows that interaction between anthropogenic activities on the coast and in the sea has allowed coastal climate hazards to affect human activities. Many projects in the Arabian Sea region must evaluate this interaction and the ensuing consequences.

Global warming is linked to the increased frequency, duration, and intensity of cyclones in the Arabian Sea region. Rapid urban expansion, port-building and infrastructural development, have led to climate risks. Coastal mega projects have further exacerbated the vulnerabilities of the coastal populations. Mumbai and various other littoral and coastal



zones in other parts of the Arabian Sea region are highly vulnerable to climate risks and events, calling for urgent regional dialogue and cooperation. India and the GCC can develop a model of regional cooperation that does not disturb logistics and supply chains.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has worryingly portrayed a reversal of development gains in education, food security, mobility, and energy security for populations dependent directly on agriculture, fisheries, forestry, and livestock. Climate change will also exacerbate waterborne diseases and worsen biodiversity loss in coastal regions, impacting regional food security, health, and water quality. Additionally, increasing urbanisation has caused localised climate change impacts, such as extreme precipitation and heat island effects, promoting unsustainable ways like air conditioning, further accentuating the problem. India and the GCC need to be aware of their regional, urban, and ecosystem interconnections, and their influence on the impacts of climate change. Such awareness will help develop mitigation and adaptation strategies without harmful consequences.

Climate change and its impact on ecosystems have led to new contestations and conflicts, displacing people relying for livelihoods and sustenance on such ecosystems. For example, the Syrian

crisis was caused not just by the civil war but also by the drought in the country. In this context, hybrid alliances and networks—not limited to governments, but involving collaboration between government agencies, NGOs, civil society, environmental activists, market players, and so on—can help achieve sustainability. The alliances must aim to contemplate and develop alternative socially-just pathways and undertake co-production of knowledge to address global challenges such as climate change.

In addressing climate change in the Arabian Sea region, India and the GCC can create ‘nested enterprises’, as Nobel Laureate Elinor Ostrom propounded, by having multiple dialogues from the lowest level of a coastal village to districts, states, countries, and the entire region. Such nested enterprises will help us understand the challenges faced by communities, groups, and economic sectors at various levels, and allow us to leverage the power of markets, technologies, and governments to produce knowledge and solutions to address these challenges at multiple levels. The IPCC’s concept of ‘response’ also explains how human, market, and government mitigation responses influence the long-term success of addressing climate risks. In this context, the Arabian Sea Dialogue lends a crucial platform to facilitate regional cooperation for addressing the anthropogenic influence on climate change.

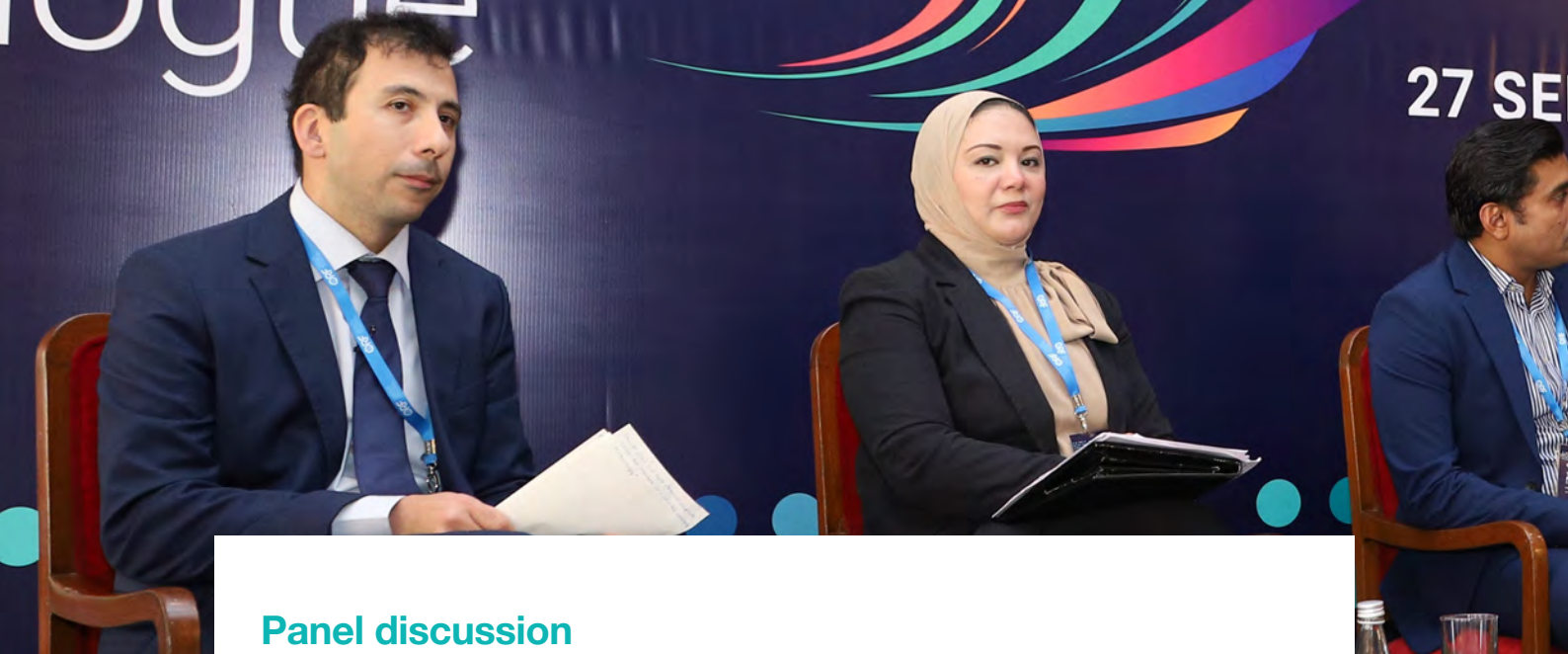
Compiled by Renita D’Souza



Arabian Sea Dialogue

CON

27 SE



Panel discussion

Green Mobility: 'Driving' the race to net zero

Speakers:

- **Emre Hatipoglu**, Research Fellow, Oil and Gas Programme, King Abdullah Petroleum Studies and Research Center, Saudi Arabia
- **Shaymaa Elsharqawi**, Chairperson of the Board of Directors, Falcon Institute for Strategic Studies and Human Development, Egypt
- **Kiran Raju**, Founder and CEO, Grene Robotics, India
- **Sharvari Patki**, Programme Head, Electric Mobility, WRI India
- **Nilanjan Ghosh**, Director, Centre for New Economic Diplomacy, Observer Research Foundation, India

Moderator: **Siddik Bakir**, Director, Oil and Gas Division, Policies and Strategic Planning, Ministry of Energy, Saudi Arabia





Green mobility is a critical energy transition component vital to achieving sustainable energy security. According to Siddik Bakir, the three megatrends characterising green mobility are decarbonisation of the grid, autonomous mobility, and clean energy sources for public transportation. Emre Hatipoglu began the deliberation by stating that green mobility involves measures that avoid or reduce carbon emissions contributed by the transportation sector. Elements critical to the green mobility ecosystem, which are not a part of the conventional oil and gas chain, define the space of green mobility. Public transport is also an essential component of the green mobility ecosystem. However, several complexities characterise the green mobility space.

Nilanjan Ghosh elaborated on these complexities and termed green mobility a socioeconomic-ecological process. According to him, while we are reducing carbon emissions through green mobility initiatives, demand in linear infrastructure will entail land use change and deforestation that will be responsible for increased carbon emissions. The transition to green mobility involves behavioural change anchored in sustainable consumption and a shift in the terms of trade in favour of green transportation vis-à-vis conventional transportation. Robust green infrastructure must be built without compromising the natural capital and natural carbon sequestration process.



One of the factors determining a nation's energy demand is the growth of its public transport infrastructure. Electrification of public transport is a step towards environmentally sustainable public transit systems. Sharvari Patki defines green mobility as a transit system powered by electricity through a green grid supported by sustainable battery management and disposal systems. In her comments about green mobility, she emphasised how E-bus tendering can be a sustainable business model as a green mobility initiative, and elaborated on the Indian example. The Convergence Energy Services Limited in collaboration with the World Resources Institute recently concluded the world's largest E-bus tender spanning 5,000 buses across five cities (Bengaluru, Delhi, Hyderabad, Kolkata, and Surat). An E-bus costs INR 50 per km without subsidy as compared to INR 80 for a diesel-run bus. The cities have adopted a gross cost contract, under which the original equipment manufacturers will be responsible for the day-to-day operations (such as ticketing and driving) of the bus transit system instead of the State Transport Undertakings (which currently regulate the state bus transit systems). This will eliminate the inefficiencies that typically characterise the operation of bus transit systems. These changes make investing in e-vehicles lucrative.

According to Sharvari Patki, the green mobility space needs to focus on a three-

layered approach—demand management, charging infrastructure, and supply-side management. NITI Aayog determined a charging infrastructure guide a few years ago, which has helped stakeholders structure their approach to charging infrastructure. Demand aggregation by E-bus tenders warrant reasonable prices, making the business model self-sustainable. The government must mandate manufacturers to supply a minimum percentage of electric vehicles.

According to Shaymaa Elsharqawi, governments are responsible for bringing about a paradigm shift in the mindset of the people to embrace the energy transition needed for green mobility. Adding to these points, Ghosh said that government subsidies, fiscal incentives, and relaxation of norms for auto loans are critical for accelerating green mobility. The Reserve Bank of India has been contemplating making lending to clean vehicles a component of the priority sector. Hatipoglu stressed the green mobility ecosystem should have a robust conflict resolution and arbitration architecture.

Kiran Raju synonymised the problem of green mobility with the wastage of resources. He stated that technological solutions enable us to achieve resource and energy efficiency. He pointed out that in certain instances, policy or investments cannot substitute the role of technology in bringing about resource





and energy efficiencies, and thereby reducing emissions. Besides policy, innovation, and investments, economics is important in the 'green' space.

The process of green transition is not immune to external shocks, as demonstrated by the Russia-Ukraine war. The conflict has disrupted global supply chains and increased energy costs.

Bakir emphasised the energy “trilemma” in this context—sustainability, energy affordability, and supply chain resilience. Hatipoglu added that it is an opportune time for India and the GCC to look together at the future. India and the GCC can unite to influence global governance on issues around energy transition and green mobility.

Compiled by Renita D'Souza





Panel discussion

Leveraging the India-Gulf relationship for Climate Finance

Speakers:

- **Walid Abdmoula**, Economic Advisor and Deputy Director General, Arab Planning Institute, Kuwait
- **Paul Abraham**, President, Hinduja Foundation, India
- **Belkacem Laabas**, Senior Advisor and Chairman of the Advisory and Institutional Support Committee, Arab Planning Institute, Kuwait
- **Shamika Ravi**, Vice President, Economic Policy, Observer Research Foundation, India
- **Prachi Shevgaonkar**, Founder and CEO, Cool the Globe, India

Moderator: **Srinath Sridharan**, Co-Founder, 4P Consulting, India





Despite the disproportionate impact of climate change on the developing world, their climate finance is in disarray, making climate mitigation difficult. Skewed finances in favour of developed nations, ambiguities in the banking sector regarding financing climate mitigation, and irregular green taxonomy across the globe have only added to the developing world's woes as they face mounting climate hazards. As such, there is a climate and capital crisis because climate finance needs to be sustainable so we do not break our economies in battling climate change.

According to the United Nations, we need US\$1.5 trillion annually to support the global green transition. The finance and

banking sector, along with governments and research organisations must work together to use traditional financing instruments to channel capital and investments into the green transition initiative. The GCC-India region has not yet adopted traditional financing instruments to complement its green initiatives, as in the West, which has impeded its global emissions commitments.

Such adaptation needs a fundamental shift in the approach to government budgets, allocations, and subsidies. Subsidies may need to be pulled back or enhanced because structural changes in society will require an empathetic response from the government. The quantum requirement for climate finance is massive,



and so the funds will have to come from everywhere, not just from the government and philanthropists. Instead of revising and reiterating the COP climate finance targets, the world must focus on meeting them. Grassroots participation and a paradigm shift in the citizen's perception regarding climate change is the first step towards attracting climate finance. Another is addressing the North-South differentiated burden and common but different responsibilities in the climate change debate. Citizen-led participation is pivotal and will provide the impetus required for climate mitigation. Mass participation will lead to significant structural changes to meet the global net-zero targets.

India is responsibly moving forward with its climate action policies. Governmental policies are also in place, wherein it has moved from conventional energy sources to non-conventional ones. However, the biggest hurdle to the Indian narrative is the financing aspect. "Where will the capital come from?" is the question that stagnates mitigation here. Political will and leadership are present. What is missing is an expanded role of multilateral lending agencies, such as the World Bank.

The latest UN Conference on Trade and Development report on Investment and Finance states that sustainable investments have increased by US\$5 trillion in 2022

from 2020 levels. However, this data seems inaccurate since these self-disclosed funds lack appropriate audit and are opaque in tracing the investments. This gap is what the India-GCC collaboration can be hinged on. India has massive renewables and technological innovation potential, and the GCC states have a huge investment portfolio. The GCC's overseas funds are divided into sustainable and unsustainable investments, with the latter accounting for a majoritarian share of the portfolio. India is a growing market for the sustainability sector that GCC states should seriously consider this aspect.

Global governments and the banking and finance sectors need to adjust their structures to accommodate climate finance. Thus, with limited risk assessment and audits, a bank—a commercial instrument—directs little climate finance. Therefore, human resource capacity building is needed to enhance climate finance. Governments and the market need to work together. India primarily has a thermal and coal sector, while the GCC has oil reserves. These energy sources will eventually be phased out much before they run out. The finance sector must therefore embed appropriate risk assessments, transition timelines, investment incentives, and project timelines. This will enable the capital markets, banking, trade and sovereign funds to channelise funds to mitigate climate change. The primary motive of this multistakeholder collaboration is to facilitate impact through investment.

Compiled by Prithvi Gupta





Perspectives

An Isthmus of Ideas

Speakers:

- **Emre Hatipoglu**, Research Fellow, Oil and Gas Programme, King Abdullah Petroleum Studies and Research Center, Saudi Arabia
- **Amer Al Rawas**, Chairman, Concordia Group, Oman

Energy and commodities lie at the heart of geopolitics and are among the biggest problems for policymakers across the globe. Renewable energy sources and each nation's nationally determined contributions and Paris Agreement pledges further accentuate energy geopolitics.

Renewable energy sources connect countries and regions in previously unseen ways in conventional geopolitics. However, they also present new challenges for policymakers, researchers, and decision-makers. In essence, renewable energy sources are abundant in nature, but the infrastructure required for their generation and transmission is not, making it an essential tool for diplomacy. According to Emre Hatipoglu,



renewable energy sources have emerged as a regional diplomacy tool, and acted as a solution or catalyser for civil conflicts in the region.

Three pillars of renewable energy dictate regional diplomacy and conflict resolution—accessibility, affordability, and availability. For example, the post-Brexit subsea electricity line between France and Ireland circumventing the British Isles exemplifies the critical role of renewables in changing regional geopolitics. Energy transmission, such as electricity, is almost instantaneous, unlike oil and gas, which have a significant lead time. This creates political and economic obstacles as storage and transmission in transit states create additional difficulties. The geopolitical leverage that transit states gain from transmission frameworks and the incumbent security issues that arise from such arrangements further increase the regional diplomatic complexities. However, renewables have impacted regional conflict and diplomacy in unorthodox ways. Hatipoglu's research suggests that different types of energy trade impact regional conflict, with cross-border electricity trade pacifying countries more than traditional energy, such as oil and gas. Therefore, it is essential to understand where such transmission lines go through, and where they do not.

Energy is paramount as it gives people the public goods to tie the country together after conflict and rebuild and reconstruct economic and humanitarian development systems. Energy trade is also directly influenced by intrastate energy distribution. In post-conflict regions, decentralised and distributed energy systems can act as a centrifugal or centripetal force, directly impacting the rest of the country and region.

Entrepreneurship drives economic growth, and India's entrepreneurial journey is a testament to that growth. Since the 1990s, India has greatly accelerated the dissemination of its entrepreneurial solutions to the rest of the world, creating several unicorns and generating employment. Amer Al Rawas emphasised the need to innovate and develop solutions domestically, intending to scale for the rest of the world. According to Al Rawas, Estonian startups incorporate the core principle of 'Build Local, Think Global', which should be espoused by entrepreneurs in the Arabian Sea region. Scalability, in essence, must be an essential strategic component for all businesses in the region.

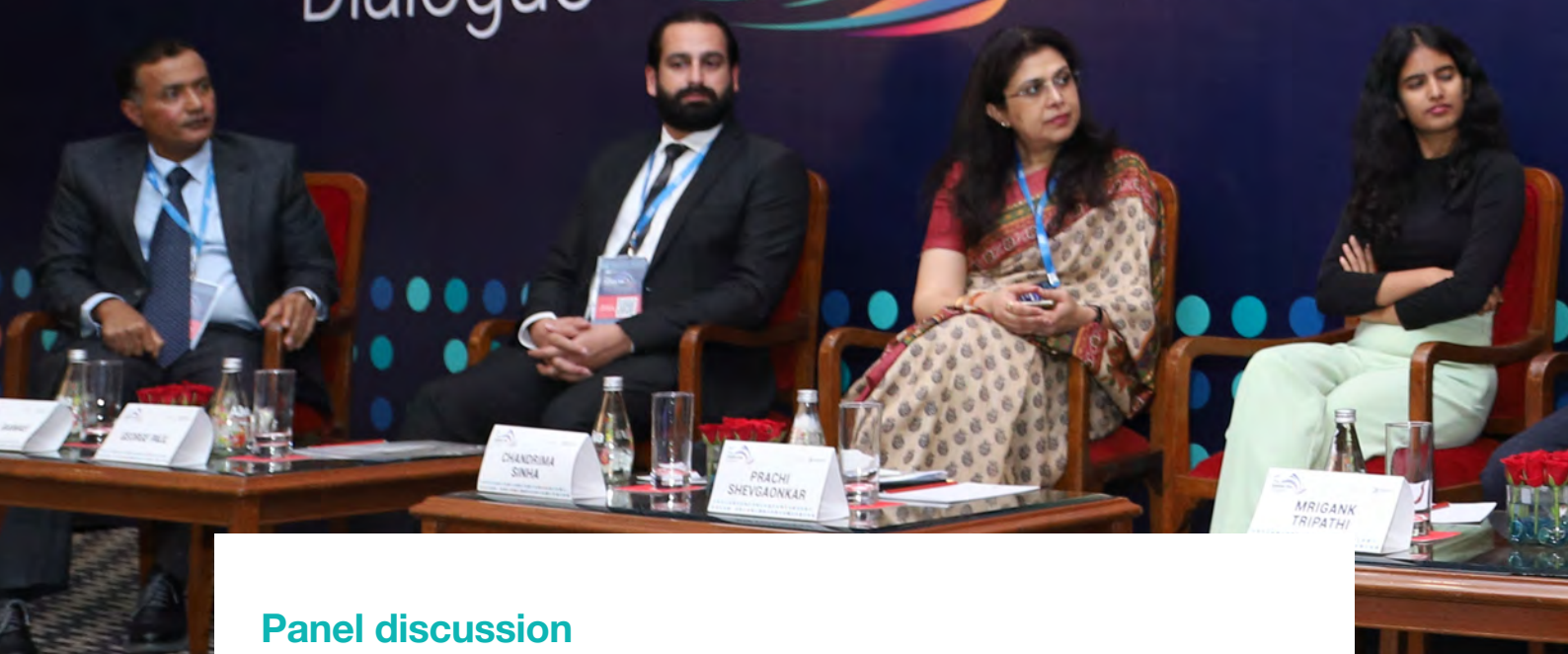
Compiled by Sauradeep Bag



The Arabian Sea Dialogue

CONNECT.

27 SEPTEMBER, 2023



Panel discussion

Making Arabian Sea Community the Global Innovation Hub

Speakers:

- **Amer Al Rawas**, Chairperson, Concordia Group, Oman
- **Chandrima Sinha**, Vice President, Invest India, Government of India
- **Mrigank Tripathi**, Chief Growth Officer, India & MEA, PeopleStrong, India
- **George Paul**, Head, Strategic Alliances and Partnerships, JioGenNext, India
- **Prachi Shevgaonkar**, Founder and CEO, Cool the Globe, India

Moderator: **Reaven Gerrad D'Souza**, Managing Editor, *The Times Kuwait*



2022 | MUMBAI, INDIA



In its most rudimentary form, entrepreneurship is problem-solving. As an emerging economy, the Indian startup ecosystem is vital to solving recurring and persistent regional problems. This session explored how India and the Arabian Sea community can develop frameworks to enhance entrepreneurship and regional social development.

Entrepreneurship is an essential component of the economic growth of nations. Emerging economies, such as India and several GCC countries, benefit tremendously from domestic innovation and its correlation to employment, wages, and social, and economic development. India has been producing unicorns at an

unprecedented rate in recent decades due to investment, credit accessibility, supportive government schemes, and a young population. Amer Al Rawas detailed the essential building blocks of any entrepreneurial environment, and placed youth-enabling frameworks as one the most crucial drivers of growth. The Arabian Sea region's demography gives it a growth opportunity that effective policy, robust public-private partnerships and investments can catalyse.

Madhukeshwar Desai also emphasised the importance of youth, particularly in a country like India. Therefore, understanding the specific future orders of impact, effective frameworks, and principles is essential. It is perhaps impossible



to predict the future of India and the GCC's entrepreneurial journey and futile to predict the future of the startup ecosystem. Instead of being goal-oriented, India can be process-oriented and focus on the principles for entrepreneurial development. Process orientation will require an unbiased and impartial investigation of the startup ecosystem, and create bespoke policy prescriptions. For instance, as Al Rawas also highlighted, India's young population places the country in an advantageous position. Therefore, the policy must boost the ecosystem. With appropriate regulations in place, leveraging the free flow of products and services across markets, India and the GCC nations can create synergies based on effective processes.

There is a renewed and urgent need to diversify the economic portfolio in the Gulf due to concerns about future hydrocarbon revenues. GCC policymakers must stimulate real economic growth that does not rely on oil and gas. The panel discussed developing a long-term plan by leveraging domestic entrepreneurship, evolving into a regional plan for the Arabian Sea community. Such a strategy would be an efficient mechanism for exchanging and co-developing ideas and for cross-border talent exchange. For instance, apprenticeship programmes for Gulf-based software developers in an IT hub like India could significantly improve knowledge-sharing and innovation.

Mrigank Tripathi emphasised the need for governments to facilitate the free flow of talent and businesses. Additionally, governments must develop practical processes for gig workers, allowing seamless regional, transnational movement of talent. The first-order effect of such policies will give businesses access to larger and more diverse markets. Interestingly, the second-order effects have the potential to catalyse different people and ideas to innovate and create new products.

India and the GCC have a shared entrepreneurial past. Countries like Saudi Arabia and the UAE were among the first nations in the world to trust and invest in the entrepreneurial visions of Indian startups. Moreover, according to Chandrima Sinha, government initiatives like Invest India have showcased India's wide-ranging startups in several GCC countries, laying the foundation for a startup bridge between India and GCC, to attempt efficient ideas, talent and capital exchange. The GCC could also incorporate the learnings from India's entrepreneurship and startup development programmes. For instance, the Gulf nations could emulate India's Atal Incubation Centres to support school- and college-level entrepreneurs with nationwide mentorship opportunities and access to capital.



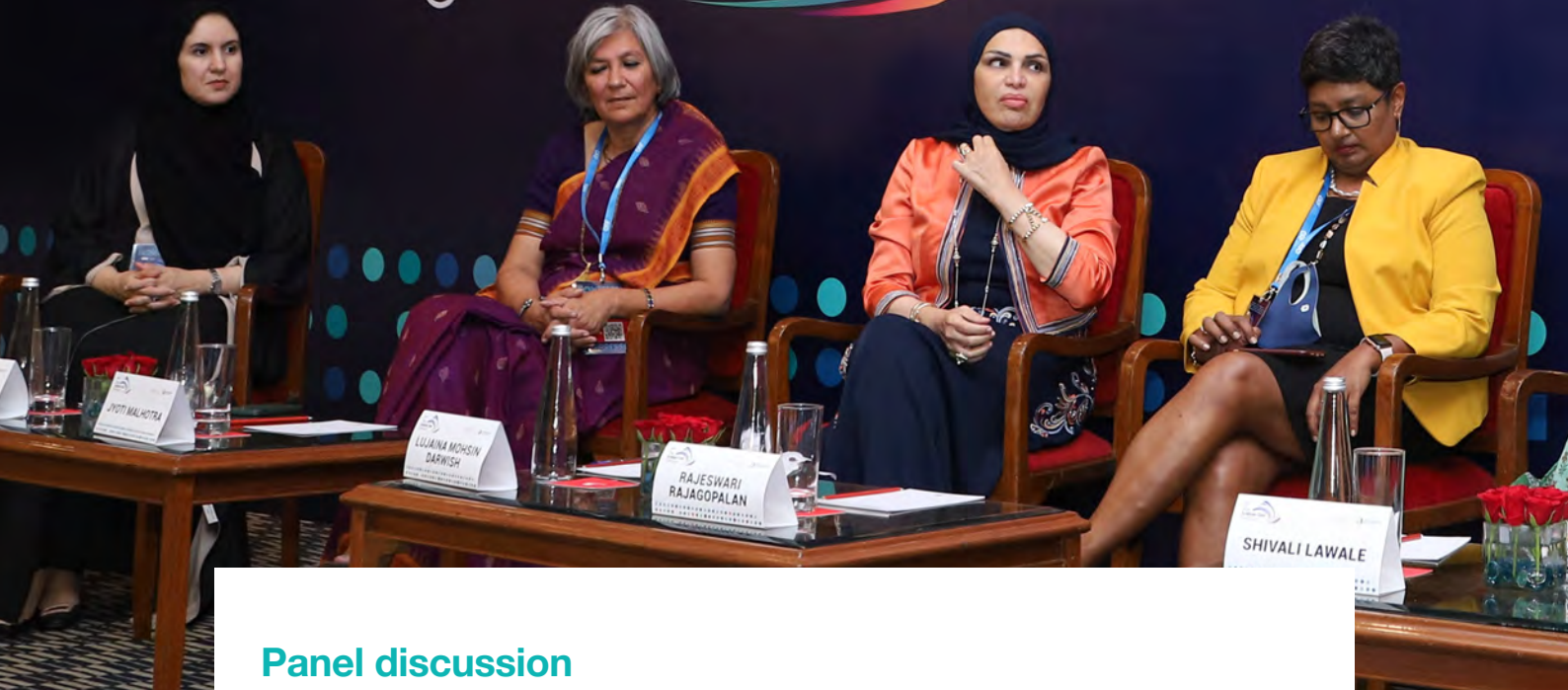


The region's education systems must incorporate research and innovation at every level of education to inculcate the drive to seek employment and generate jobs through new ventures and ideas. India and the GCC must reflect the long-term vision for the region. Today's young entrepreneurs will become tomorrow's global leaders to

safeguard the region's interests and strengthen its future capabilities. Leveraging the youth and encouraging a startup ecosystem designed for entrepreneurs by entrepreneurs would improve the region's startup growth and offer a long-term vision that embraces sustainability and inclusivity.

Compiled by Sauradeep Bag





Panel discussion

Women Leadership in the Fourth Industrial Revolution

Speakers:

- **Lujaina Mohsin Darwish**, Chairperson, Mohsin Haider Darwish LLC - ITICS; Member, Majlis A'Dawla (Oman State Council); Chairperson, India-Oman Friendship Society
- **Shivali Lawale**, Director, Symbiosis School of International Studies, India
- **Shaikha Najla Mohamed Salem Alqasimi**, Director, Global Affairs Department, B'huth (Dubai Public Policy Research Centre); Former UAE ambassador
- **Rajeshwari Rajagopalan**, Director, Centre for Security, Strategy and Technology, Observer Research Foundation, India
- **Jyoti Malhotra**, Senior Consulting Editor, *The Print*, India

Moderator: **Ambika Vishwanath**, Founder and Director, Kubernein Initiative, India



2022 | MUMBAI, INDIA



Over the last few years, there has been a global recognition of increasing women's presence, leadership, and voice in all spheres of policymaking and global governance, including the Fourth Industrial Revolution. However, statistics tell a different story. Ambika Vishwanath pointed out that the number of women in positions of power globally is still miniscule compared to the number of men. But she also cautioned that it is not only the number of women in positions of power that matters; until these women can exercise their power, those numbers mean very little.

Shaikha Najla Mohamed Salem Alqasimi argued that, unlike Western societies,

West Asian societies perceive these issues differently. She countered the usual perception of West Asia as a male-dominant society by highlighting that in UAE, for instance, there are more female university graduates than male in the workforce. In addition, women dominate the field of education and healthcare. Lujaina Mohsin Darwish echoed Najla's comments that Oman has facilitated women's empowerment since the early 1970s. Oman had the region's first female minister, ambassador, and parliamentarian. Oman may be a conservative society, but it is open-minded too. For women's participation to grow in professional services, mentorship of the younger generation is essential.





Shivali Lawale underlined the importance of putting more resources into STEM education to prepare women for the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Across the Global South, and even in the developed economies, societies perceive disciplines such as Mathematics, Science, and Engineering as masculine. Since not many women take up studies in those disciplines, we need initiatives to encourage a change. Lawale cite the L'Oreal Foundation's 'Women in Science' initiative, which awards scholarships to women from economically deprived backgrounds to pursue a career in science, as an example for businesses and multinational corporations to emulate to make a

positive change. Automation brought about by the Fourth Industrial Revolution will replace women's repetitive jobs. However, it will also create new opportunities and situations that demand creativity and problem-solving skills. Women can excel here, provided they show up first. She emphasised that women must become digitally fluent.

Rajeshwari Rajagopalan pointed out that while mentoring is essential, bringing women into leadership positions is also critical. For instance, how many women who pass out of STEM education make it to the actual industry or a career in the tech industry is important. To enable



more participation by women on this front, we need to ensure equal pay and women's empowerment. For instance, a study from a few years ago showcased that men go up the career ladder based on potential, while women rise on past accomplishments.

For decades, a system has been in place that empowers women to a certain level—graduating from university. However, this system does not create job opportunities for women to flourish. With technological

advancements, we now have a chance to empower women, create jobs, and create new opportunities to be creative and entrepreneurial. We must develop ecosystems for women that act as a catalyst for entrepreneurship. The GCC and India can forge such initiatives for replicability and scalability. The Arabian Sea Dialogue is an excellent platform to create a network of women to share experiences, engage in mentorship, and encourage each other.

Compiled by Sameer Patil





Perspectives

The 'Y' Factor: Towards Shaping a Common Arabian Sea Destiny

Speakers:

- **Madhukeshwar Desai**, Founder and CEO, Mumbai Centre for International Arbitration; National Vice President, Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha, India
- **Kaustubh Dhavse**, Officer on Special Duty to the Deputy Chief Minister, Government of Maharashtra, India

The burden and the responsibility of the future lie in the hands of the people who are going to live it, Madhukeshwar Desai noted as he explained the natural skin in the game for the region's economic future. Entrepreneurship is inherently a forward-looking process, leveraging youth and innovation. These two components—youth and innovation—are fortuitously abundant in the region. However, the region lacks concrete guidelines or principles to strengthen the collaborative ecosystem further for it to compete with global startups, mainly from the West. It is crucial for entrepreneurs to have a multi-generational outlook while developing products, as the interactive process



of innovation scaled over time generates successful and impactful businesses. Additionally, for individuals and society, inclusivity and prosperity must be at the heart of every entrepreneurial journey. These core principles of multi-generational thinking, inclusivity, and prosperity will enable India and the Arabian Sea region to set a new benchmark for global innovation.

India is one of the youngest nations on the planet, has one of the most diverse startup ecosystems in the world, and is now the world's fifth-largest economy. Is that a mere coincidence or the result of the right set of ingredients needed for exponential growth? Kaustubh Dhavse exuded optimism about India's 10-trillion-dollar economy dream and Maharashtra's pivotal role in national economic development. Leveraging the nation's youth is the only way to realise this economic dream. This economic journey starts with the aspiration displayed by the sheer magnitude of the young in the country. It gradually reaches its goal with the right combination of policy interventions and environments that promote innovation and inclusivity.

With 107 unicorns, the Indian startup ecosystem is currently the third-largest globally. This national entrepreneurial process started in the late 1990s with the rampant growth of the IT services sector, which quickly became one of India's most important exports to the rest of the world. Today, the innovation mindset

still finds itself in the country's startup ecosystem, promoting and nurturing young entrepreneurship at a previously unseen scale.

The Indian government has taken several initiatives to take domestic innovations to the global arena. The GCC nations, in this case, have become eminent partners for talent and idea sharing, and foreign investments. This is another feather in the cap for the growing India-GCC relationship, as the region already shares a vast history encompassing everything from trade to culture for centuries.

Indian policymakers must acknowledge the region's strengths to achieve its economic goals—the youth. The juxtaposition of youth and the entrepreneurial environment leads to domestic breakthroughs, which inevitably grow and find themselves in global markets. The GCC has become an ideal first step into global markets for Indian startups due to its diverse economic interests, shared cultural past, and willingness to grow. India also reciprocates these benefits to the GCC by providing additional markets for growth for gulf enterprises and extensive talent exchange.

A demographic dividend can quickly become a curse in the absence of efficient frameworks. Therefore, it is pertinent for the Indian and Gulf governments to connect, collaborate, and create principles and guidelines to reach India's and the region's economic goals.

Compiled by Sauradeep Bag





Perspectives

Emerging Architectures

Speaker:

- **Dr. Hamad Ebrahim Abdulla**, Executive Director, Bahrain Center for Strategic, International and Energy Studies (Derasat)

There is no doubt that the relationship between the Arab Gulf states and India has had a long history dating back to the third millennium. However, the momentum with which this relationship has flourished in the past few years has reiterated its significance even in contemporary times. Highlighting the common challenges that the two sides face—security threats, trade exchanges, economic diversification, climate change, and food and energy security—Hamad Ebrahim Al-Abdulla called for the Arab Gulf-Indian partnership to be a key catalyst in solving these issues and working together to identify new areas of convergence. He further suggested that



the two regions should focus on three key priority areas:

- Youth engagement to promote pluralism and cultural tolerance
- Technology partnership in e-governance, cybersecurity, and joint investments
- Building a future with common goals and objectives while developing an integrated strategic perspective grounded in history, geography, and necessities of cooperation.

Compiled by Hargun Sethi





Valedictory Session

Towards a Shared, Prosperous Future

Speakers:

- **Lujaina Mohsin Darwish**, Chairperson, Mohsin Haider Darwish LLC - ITICS; Member, Majlis A'Dawla (Oman State Council); Chairperson, India-Oman Friendship Society
- **Pankaj Khimji**, Advisor Foreign Trade and International Cooperation, Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, Oman; Director, Khimji Ramdas Group; Chairperson, Oman Cricket
- **Mahjoob Zweiri**, Director, Gulf Studies Centre, Qatar University, Qatar
- Navdeep Suri, Distinguished Fellow, Observer Research Foundation, India
- **Shaikha Najla Mohamed Salem Alqasimi**, Director, Global Affairs Department, B'huth (Dubai Public Policy Research Centre); Former UAE ambassador

Moderator: **Rajesh Shah**, Trustee, Observer Research Foundation and Former Chairman, Mukand Ltd.



2022 | MUMBAI, INDIA



The future holds tremendous promise for India and the GCC to connect, create, and collaborate in numerous ways and in various sectors. The 2022 edition of the Arabian Sea Dialogue aimed to bring about these renewed areas of cooperation to the limelight and encouraged policymakers, business leaders, civil society, and youth to jointly deliberate on producing a blueprint for an Arabian Sea Community.

This panel summarised the key takeaways from the conference and the plan of action India and the GCC countries should follow henceforth. Rajesh Shah began the discussion by stating that in addition to the countries in India's immediate neighbourhood, the Gulf countries enjoy

a very close relationship with India, not just geographically but also economically, politically, and culturally. While keeping the momentum of such conversations going, he asked the panellists how platforms like these can be intensified and made essential to gather the attention of the world community.

Identifying the prospects for the India-GCC partnership, Pankaj Khimji postulated three crucial focus areas—youth involvement from the ideation stage, establishing collaborations between individual Indian states and the GCC countries, and devising ways to leverage energy and resources to mitigate global challenges. For Mahjoob Zweiri, consistency and continuity are the key factors to ensure survivability and enhance



the popularity of such engagements. He further argued that instead of looking towards the West to find solutions to global problems, India and the Gulf should capitalise on the localisation of ideas and strengthen them within the context of the Arabian Sea region.

Furthering the discussion, Lujaina Mohsin Darwish stated that the conference was a much-needed platform to polish the historic relationship between India and GCC. She recommended that in the future, the platform should have more focused discussions on fewer topics involving the youth and domain experts to arrive at tangible solutions and policy recommendations for the respective governments. Adding to this, Shaikha Najla Mohamed Salem Alqasimi urged that the next step for India and the GCC countries is to walk the talk and cooperate to turn into reality the ideas explored

during the conference. Lastly, Ambassador Navdeep Suri pointed out that such discussions are imperative to agree on common goals and resolve disagreements on certain aspects. He suggested that, just like the G20, India and the GCC should have separate dialogues on key priority areas (for instance, an India-GCC Startup Dialogue, an India-GCC Women Dialogue, and an India-GCC Green Transitions Dialogue), which should involve scholars and government officials to ensure that discussions move from the ideation stage to timely execution.

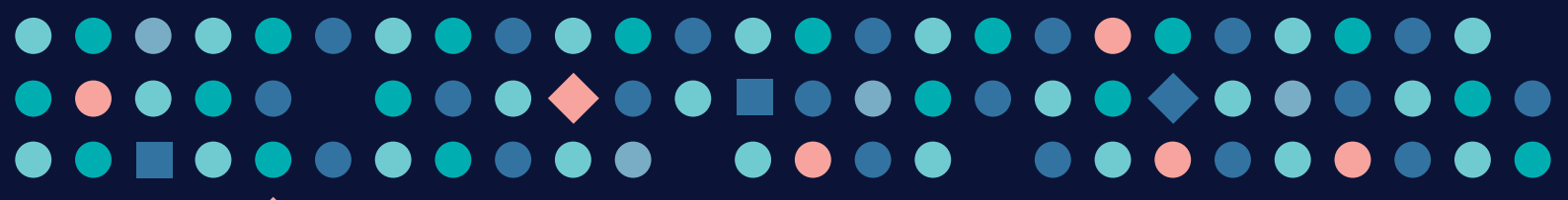
As the nature of international cooperation shifts from multilateral to minilateral groupings, such as the I2U2, QUAD and AUKUS, a re-energised and revitalised dynamism in India-GCC relations is a must for furthering the interests of both regions and ensuring the global good.

Compiled by Hargun Sethi





ABOUT THE RAPPORTEURS



Apoorva Lalwani was an Associate Fellow at ORF Mumbai.

Ayjaz Wani is a Research Fellow at ORF Mumbai.

Hargun Sethi was an intern at ORF.

Jhanvi Tripathi is an Associate Fellow at ORF.

Kabir Taneja is a Fellow at ORF.

Nutika Kale was an intern at ORF Mumbai.

Prithvi Gupta is an intern at ORF Mumbai.

Radhika Sareen is an intern at ORF Mumbai.

Renita D'Souza is a Fellow at ORF Mumbai.

Sameer Patil is a Senior Fellow at ORF Mumbai.

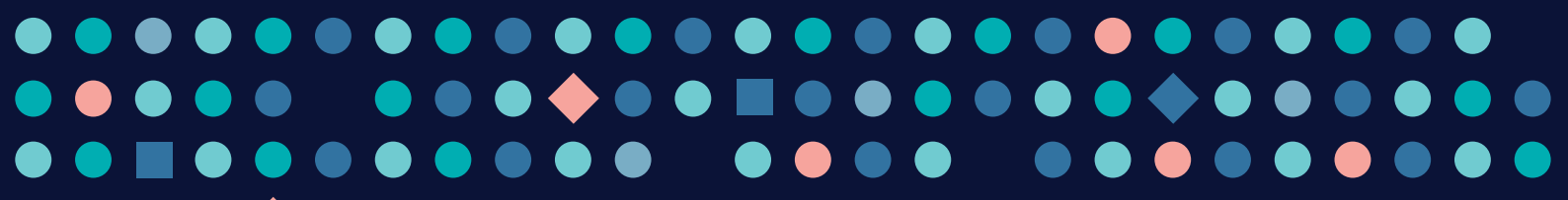
Sauradeep Bag is an Associate Fellow at ORF Mumbai.

Shruti Jain is an Associate Fellow at ORF.





CONFERENCE AGENDA



8:30am – 9.30am Registration

9:30am – 10.25am OPENING SESSION

WELCOME

- **Jaibal Naduvath**, Vice President and Senior Fellow, Observer Research Foundation, India

KEYNOTES

- **Thani bin Ahmed Al Zeyoudi**, Minister of State for Foreign Trade, Ministry of Economy, UAE
- **Lujaina Mohsin Darwish**, Chairperson, Mohsin Haider Darwish LLC - ITICS; Member, Majlis A'Dawla (Oman State Council); Chairperson, India-Oman Friendship Society
- **Harsh Vardhan Shringla**, India's Chief G20 Coordinator; Former Foreign Secretary, India
- **Pankaj Khimji**, Advisor, Foreign Trade and International Cooperation, Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, Oman; Director, Khimji Ramdas Group; Chairperson, Oman Cricket

LOOKING AHEAD

- **Navdeep Suri**, Distinguished Fellow, Observer Research Foundation, India

10.25am - 11.10am PANEL DISCUSSION

NEW ALIGNMENTS, NEW OPPORTUNITIES

Speakers

- **Pankaj Khimji**, Advisor, Foreign Trade and International Cooperation, Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, Oman; Director, Khimji Ramdas Group; Chairperson, Oman Cricket
- **Vice Admiral Girish Luthra (Retd.)**, PVSM, AVSM, VSM, ADC, Former Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Southern and Western Naval Commands, Indian Navy; Distinguished Fellow, Observer Research Foundation, India



- **Staff Colonel Pilot Adel Binsanqoor (Retd.)**, Acting Director of Strategic Study and Scientific Research Division, The Emirates Centre for Strategic Studies and Research, UAE
- **Sultan Barakat**, Founding Director, Center for Conflict and Humanitarian Studies, Doha Institute, Hamad Bin Khalifa University, Qatar
- **Abdullah Baabood**, State of Qatar Chair for Islamic Area Studies, Waseda University, Japan
- Moderator: **Shamika Ravi**, Vice President, Economic Policy, Observer Research Foundation, India

11.10am – 11.20am SPECIAL ADDRESS

Vice Admiral Ajendra Bahadur Singh, PVSM, AVSM, VSM, ADC, Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Western Naval Command, Indian Navy

11.20am - 12.05pm PANEL DISCUSSION DECODING THE NEW SECURITY PARADIGM

Speakers

- **Vice Admiral Ajendra Bahadur Singh**, PVSM, AVSM, VSM, ADC, Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Western Naval Command, Indian Navy
- **Sultan Barakat**, Founding Director, Center for Conflict and Humanitarian Studies, Doha Institute, Hamad Bin Khalifa University, Qatar
- **Shaikha Najla Mohamed Salem Alqasimi**, Director, Global Affairs Department, B'huth (Dubai Public Policy Research Centre); Former UAE ambassador
- **Rajeswari Rajagopalan**, Director, Centre for Security, Strategy and Technology, Observer Research Foundation, India
- **Mahjoob Zweiri**, Director, Gulf Studies Centre, Qatar University, Qatar
- Moderator: **Harsh Pant**, Vice President, Studies and Foreign Policy, Observer Research Foundation, India



12.05pm – 12.20pm **TEA BREAK**

12.20pm – 12.30pm **SPECIAL ADDRESS**

Harsh Vardhan Shringla, India's Chief G20 Coordinator; Former Foreign Secretary, India

12.30pm - 1.15pm **PANEL DISCUSSION**

INDIA, GCC AND THE G20: NEW OPPORTUNITIES, NEW POSSIBILITIES

Speakers

- **Harsh Vardhan Shringla**, India's Chief G20 Coordinator; Former Foreign Secretary, India
- **Belkacem Laabas**, Senior Advisor and Chairman of the Advisory and Institutional Support Committee, Arab Planning Institute, Kuwait
- **Shaikha Najla Mohamed Salem Alqasimi**, Director, Global Affairs Department, B'huth (Dubai Public Policy Research Centre); Former UAE ambassador
- **Shivali Lawale**, Director, Symbiosis School of International Studies, India
- **Mihir Sharma**, Director, Centre for Economy and Growth Programme, Observer Research Foundation, India
- Moderator: **Jyoti Malhotra**, Senior Consulting Editor, ThePrint, India

1.15pm – 1.25pm **SPECIAL ADDRESS**

Sheikh Humaid bin Ali Al Maani, Head, Global Affairs Department Foreign Ministry of Oman

1.25pm – 2.15pm **LUNCH BREAK**



2.15pm – 2.45pm **PERSPECTIVES**

A SEA OF OPPORTUNITY

- **Gopichand P Hinduja**, Co-Chairman, Hinduja Group; Chairman, Hinduja Automotive Limited, United Kingdom
 - **Manisha Verma**, Principal Secretary, Skills, Employment, Entrepreneurship and Innovation, Government of Maharashtra, India
 - **Siddik Bakir**, Director, Oil and Gas Division, Policies and Strategic Planning, Ministry of Energy, Saudi Arabia
 - **Arun Raste**, Managing Director and CEO, National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange (NCDEX), India
-

2.45pm – 3.30pm **PANEL DISCUSSION**

'TRADE WITH TRUST': INDIA AND THE GCC

Speakers

- **Walid Abdmoula**, Economic Advisor and Deputy Director General, Arab Planning Institute, Kuwait
 - **Arun Raste**, Managing Director and CEO, National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange (NCDEX), India
 - **Abdullah Baabood**, State of Qatar Chair for Islamic Area Studies, Waseda University, Japan
 - **Shubhada Rao**, Founder, QuantEco Research, India
 - **Chandrima Sinha**, Vice President, Invest India, Government of India
 - Moderator: **Reaven Gerrad D'Souza**, Managing Editor, The Times Kuwait
-

3.30pm – 3.50pm **PERSPECTIVES**

CHANGING PRIORITIES IN THE ERA OF THE GREEN TRANSITION

- **Devanathan Parthasarathy**, Professor, Humanities and Social Sciences, IIT Bombay, India
-



3.50pm – 4.35pm

PANEL DISCUSSION**GREEN MOBILITY: 'DRIVING' THE RACE TO NET ZERO**

Speakers

- **Shaymaa Elsharqawi**, Chairperson of the Board of Directors, Falcon Institute for Strategic Studies and Human Development, Egypt
- **Emre Hatipoglu**, Research Fellow, Oil and Gas Programme, King Abdullah Petroleum Studies and Research Center, Saudi Arabia
- **Kiran Raju**, Founder and CEO, Grene Robotics, India
- **Nilanjan Ghosh**, Director, Centre for New Economic Diplomacy, Observer Research Foundation, India
- **Sharvari Patki**, Programme Head, Electric Mobility, WRI India
- Moderator: **Siddik Bakir**, Director, Oil and Gas Division, Policies and Strategic Planning, Ministry of Energy, Saudi Arabia

4.35pm – 5.20pm

PANEL DISCUSSION**LEVERAGING THE INDIA-GULF RELATIONSHIP FOR CLIMATE FINANCE**

Speakers

- **Walid Abdmoula**, Economic Advisor and Deputy Director General, Arab Planning Institute, Kuwait
- **Paul Abraham**, President, Hinduja Foundation, India
- **Belkacem Laabas**, Senior Advisor and Chairman of the Advisory and Institutional Support Committee, Arab Planning Institute, Kuwait
- **Srinath Sridharan**, Co-Founder, 4P Consulting, India
- **Prachi Shevgaonkar**, Founder and CEO, Cool The Globe, India
- Moderator: **Shamika Ravi**, Vice President, Economic Policy, Observer Research Foundation, India

5.20pm – 5.35pm

TEA BREAK

5.35pm – 5.45pm

SPECIAL ADDRESS

- **Sanjay Kumar**, Secretary (Youth Affairs), Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, Government of India



5.45pm – 6.05pm **PERSPECTIVES**
AN ISTHMUS OF IDEAS

- **Emre Hatipoglu**, Research Fellow, Oil and Gas Programme, King Abdullah Petroleum Studies and Research Center, Saudi Arabia
 - **Amer Al Rawas**, Chairperson, Concordia Group, Oman
-

6.05pm - 6.50pm **PANEL DISCUSSION**
MAKING ARABIAN SEA COMMUNITY THE GLOBAL INNOVATION HUB

Speakers

- **Amer Al Rawas**, Chairperson, Concordia Group, Oman
 - **Chandrima Sinha**, *Vice President, Invest India, Government of India*
 - **Mrigank Tripathi**, Chief Growth Officer, India & MEA, PeopleStrong, India
 - **George Paul**, Head, Strategic Alliances and Partnerships, JioGenNext, India
 - **Prachi Shevgaonkar**, Founder and CEO, Cool The Globe, India
 - Moderator: **Reaven Gerrad D'Souza**, Managing Editor, The Times Kuwait
-

6.50pm – 7.35pm **PANEL DISCUSSION**
WOMEN LEADERSHIP IN THE FOURTH INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

Speakers

- **Lujaina Mohsin Darwish**, Chairperson, Mohsin Haider Darwish LLC - ITICS; Member, Majlis A'Dawla (Oman State Council); Chairperson, India-Oman Friendship Society
 - **Shivali Lawale**, Director, Symbiosis School of International Studies, India
 - **Shaikha Najla Mohamed Salem Alqasimi**, Director, Global Affairs Department, B'huth (Dubai Public Policy Research Centre); Former UAE ambassador
 - **Shaymaa Elsharqawi**, Chairperson of the Board of Directors, Falcon Institute for Strategic Studies and Human Development, Egypt
 - **Ambika Vishwanath**, Founder and Director, Kubernein Initiative, India
 - Moderator: **Jyoti Malhotra**, Senior Consulting Editor, ThePrint, India
-



7.35pm – 8.05pm **PERSPECTIVES**
THE 'Y' FACTOR: TOWARDS SHAPING A COMMON ARABIAN SEA DESTINY

- **Madhukeshwar Desai**, Founder and CEO, Mumbai Centre for International Arbitration; National Vice President, Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha, India
- **Kaustubh Dhavse**, Officer on Special Duty to the Deputy Chief Minister, Government of Maharashtra, India

8.05pm – 8.25pm **PERSPECTIVES**
EMERGING ARCHITECTURES

- **Hamad Ebrahim Al-Abdulla**, Executive Director, Bahrain Center for Strategic, International and Energy Studies (DERASAT), Bahrain

8.25pm – 9.30pm **VALEDICTORY SESSION**

TOWARDS A SHARED, PROSPEROUS FUTURE

- **Lujaina Mohsin Darwish**, Chairperson, Mohsin Haider Darwish LLC - ITICS; Member, Majlis A'Dawla (Oman State Council); Chairperson, India-Oman Friendship Society
- **Pankaj Khimji**, Advisor Foreign Trade and International Cooperation, Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, Oman; Director, Khimji Ramdas Group; Chairperson, Oman Cricket
- **Mahjoob Zweiri**, Director, Gulf Studies Centre, Qatar University, Qatar
- **Navdeep Suri**, Distinguished Fellow, Observer Research Foundation, India
- **Sanjay Kumar**, Secretary (Youth Affairs), Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, Government of India
- **Rajesh Shah**, Trustee, Observer Research Foundation; Co-Chairperson and Managing Director, Mukand Ltd., India

VOTE OF THANKS

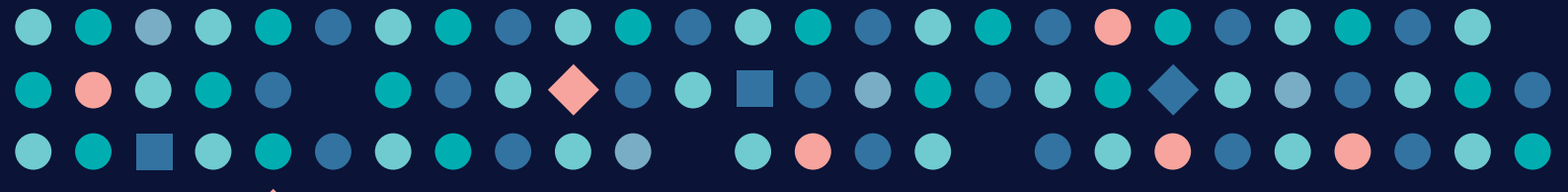
- **Dhaval Desai**, Vice President and Senior Fellow, Observer Research Foundation, India

9.30pm onwards **DINNER**





SPONSORS



BILL & MELINDA
GATES *foundation*





Ideas • Forums • Leadership • Impact

20, Rouse Avenue Institutional Area
New Delhi - 110 002, INDIA
+91-11-35332000 Fax: +91-11-35332005
contactus@orfonline.org
www.orfonline.org