INDIA- ISRAEL RELATIONS:

The two countries enjoy an extensive economic, military, and strategic relationship. India is the largest buyer of Israeli military equipment and Israel is the second-largest defence supplier to India after Russia. Military and strategic ties between the two nations extend to intelligence sharing on terrorist groups and joint military training.

As of 2014, India is the third-largest Asian trade partner of Israel, and tenth-largest trade partner overall. In 2014, bilateral trade, excluding military sales, stood at US$4.52 billion. Relations further expanded during Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s administration, with India abstaining from voting against Israel in the United Nations in several resolutions. As of 2015, the two nations are negotiating an extensive bilateral free trade agreement, focusing on areas such as information technology, biotechnology, and agriculture. According to an international poll conducted in 2009, 58% of Indians expressed sympathy with Israel, compared with 56% of Americans.
HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

India's position on the establishment of the State of Israel was affected by many factors, including India's own partition on religious lines, and India's relationship with other nations. Mahatma Gandhi believed the Jews had a good case and a prior claim for Israel but opposed the creation of Israel on religious or mandated terms. India voted against the Partitioning of Palestine plan of 1947 and voted against Israel's admission to the United Nations in 1949.

On 17 September 1950, India officially recognized the State of Israel. Following India’s recognition of Israel, Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru stated, "We would have [recognized Israel] long ago, because Israel is a fact. We refrained because of our desire not to offend the sentiments of our friends in the Arab countries." In 1953, Israel was permitted to open a consulate in Bombay (now Mumbai). However, the Nehru government did not want to pursue full diplomatic relations with Israel as it supported the Palestinian cause, and believed that permitting Israel to open an embassy in New Delhi would damage relations with the Arab world.

From India's recognition of Israel in 1950 to the early 1990s, the relationship remained informal in nature. India's opposition to official diplomatic relations with Israel stemmed from both domestic and foreign considerations. Domestically, politicians in India feared hurting Muslim citizens if relations were normalised with Israel. Additionally, India did not want to jeopardise the large amount of its citizens working in Arab States of the Persian Gulf, who were helping India maintain its foreign-exchange reserves. India's domestic need for energy was another reason for the lack of normalisation of ties with Israel, in terms of safeguarding the flow of oil from Arab nations. India's foreign policy goals and alliances also proved problematic to formal relations with Israel, including India's support for the pro-Palestine Liberation Organization Non-Aligned Movement, India's tilt towards the Soviet Union during the Cold War, and India's desire to counter Pakistan's influence with the Arab states. On an ideological level the Indian National Congress, opposed Israel due to their perception that it was a state based on religion, analogous to Pakistan.

After decades of non-aligned and pro-Arab policy, India formally established relations with Israel in January 1992 and ties between the two nations have flourished since, primarily due to common strategic interests and security threats. The formation of Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), which allegedly neglected the sentiments of Indian Muslims, and the blocking of India by Pakistan from joining the OIC are considered to be the causes of this diplomatic shift. On a diplomatic level, both the countries have managed to maintain healthy relations despite India’s repeated strong condemnations of Israeli military actions in Palestinian territories.

What is India’s stand on Israel-Hamas conflict:

At the height of the tension between Israel and Hamas in July India offered a rhetorical condemnation holding both sides responsible for erupting violence and asked Israel to stop "disproportionate use of force" in Gaza which was read by many as departure from tradition of more vocal supports for the Palestinian cause. External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj insisted that "there is absolutely no change in India’s policy towards Palestine, which is that we fully support the Palestinian cause while maintaining good relations with Israel. " clarifying India’s current position on the issue. While that might sound to some like fence-sitting, it is a policy shared by all Indian governments over the past 20 years following the establishment of formal diplomatic relation in 1992.
In a symbolic gesture India joined others BRICS nations in voting at the United Nations Human Rights Council for a probe into the alleged human rights violation in Gaza, which generated mixed response among media and analysts in India. When the UNHRC report alleging that Israel had committed war crimes was tabled for vote, India abstained from voting, one of five countries to do so. 41 nations voted in favour, and the United States was the only vote against. Israeli envoy to India Daniel Carmon thanked India for not supporting what he described as "another anti Israel bashing resolution".

**News:**

**July 24, 2014: India votes against Israel in UNHRC resolution on Gaza. [India Votes for UN Probe into Israeli Attacks]**

**July 3, 2015 India abstains from UNHRC vote against Israel**

India was one of five countries including Kenya and Macedonia that abstained. The government on Friday denied what appeared to be a major shift in India's policy on Israel, after it abstained from a vote against Israel at the U.N. Human Rights Council in Geneva. Significantly, India had voted against Israel and in favour of the UNHRC resolution (against) in July 24, 2014 that had instituted this very inquiry report into the Gaza violence in which more than 2,300 had been killed in Israeli airstrikes on Gaza.

However, the government denied any policy shift, indicating that India had abstained from voting because the UNHRC resolution had included a reference to taking Israel to the International Criminal Court, which India considers “intrusive”.

“In the past also, whenever a Human Rights Council resolution had made a direct reference to the ICC, as had happened in the Resolutions on Syria and North Korea, our general approach had been to abstain. We have followed the same principle in our voting on today’s Resolution,” said the official spokesperson.

**July 21 2015: INDIA AGAIN ABSTAINS IN ISRAEL-RELATED UN VOTE**

**Dec 2016: Israel's envoy thanked India for its decision to abstain from Voting against Israel at the UN, UNHRC and UNESCO.**

**Developments in 2016:**

Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj visited Israel in January 2016. During the visit, she visited the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial in Jerusalem, and met with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, President Reuven Rivlin, members of the cabinet, and the Indian Jewish communities in Israel.

In September 2016, Minister of Agriculture Radha Mohan Singh visited Israel to bolster India-Israel agricultural ties. He met his Israeli counterpart Uri Ariel, where the discussion concerned about collaborative opportunities in agriculture between both the countries.

Israeli President Reuven Rivlin visited India for a week-long state visit in November 2016, becoming the second Israeli President to visit the country. Rivlin visited New Delhi, Agra, Karnal, Chandigarh and Mumbai. He spent the last day of his visit in Mumbai paying homage to the victims of the 2008 Mumbai attacks, and meeting with the Indian Jewish community. Israel currently regards Iran as a major threat to its national security, and Rivlin expressed this concern.
in meetings with Prime Minister Modi. Following his visit, Rivlin told Israel media that despite growing economic ties with both countries, the Indian government had assured him that India would support Israel despite the former's relations with Iran. Rivlin said, "They assure us that when the time will come they will never, never, ever let anyone [act against] the existence of Israel."

**Developments in 2017:**

In July 2017, Narendra Modi became the first ever Indian Prime Minister to visit Israel. It was noted that Prime Minister Modi did not visit Palestine during the trip, breaking from convention. With the sole exception of Union Minister Rajnath Singh, previous trips by Indian ministers and President Mukherjee included visits to both Israel and Palestine. The Indian media described the move as the "dehyphenation" of India's relations with the two states.

*India-Israel Joint Statement during the visit of Prime Minister to Israel (July 5, 2017)*

Marking the 25th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries, Prime Minister Narendra Modi of India visited Israel from 4-6 July 2017 at the invitation of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel. This historic first-ever visit by an Indian Prime Minister to Israel solidified the enduring friendship between their peoples and raised the bilateral relationship to that of a strategic partnership.

Noting that they represent two cradles of civilizations that have nurtured their respective heritages over the centuries, the two leaders affirmed their intention to build a broad-based relationship that will realise the full potential of their association. In doing so, they recognized that throughout history, the Jewish Communities have always had a home in India and have been treated with warmth and respect.
Reviewing the development of the relationship after a quarter century of diplomatic ties, the two leaders agreed on initiatives and policies that would reflect the goals and aspirations of both nations and widen their collaborative endeavors in a broad range of areas. They visualized that the two countries will become close partners in development, technology, innovation, entrepreneurship, defence and security.

Recognizing its centrality for development, India and Israel agreed to establish a "Strategic Partnership in Water and Agriculture". This will focus on water conservation, waste-water treatment and its reuse for agriculture, desalination, water utility reforms, and the cleaning of the Ganges and other rivers using advanced water technologies. It will also include the reinforcement and expansion of the existing Centres of Excellence (COE) under the stewardship of the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MASHAV) and the Ministry of Agriculture of India to promote commercially viable business models involving Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs); the provision of quality planting material; and the transfer of post-harvest technical know-how and market linkages involving the private sector through PPP, B2B & other models. The two leaders also agreed on the establishment of a Joint Working Group to steer this Partnership.

The two Prime Ministers noted the importance of realizing the full potential of bilateral trade and investment. They tasked the India-Israel CEO Forum to come up with early recommendations in this regard. Both leaders underlined the need to boost bilateral cooperation in innovation and entrepreneurship and called for greater collaboration in the field of start-ups.

Recognizing the importance of facilitating movement of businessmen and women, India and Israel underlined their expectation that the granting of multiple entry visas to business people for up to five years will encourage greater economic and commercial exchanges.

The two Prime Ministers agreed that negotiations would be conducted on an agreement for the Protection of Investments in order to encourage bilateral investments from both sides.

The two Prime Ministers welcomed the conclusion of the Memorandum of Understanding for establishing the India-Israel Industrial R&D and Innovation Fund (I4F) by the Department of Science and Technology, India and the National Authority for Technological Innovation, Israel with a contribution of US$ 20 million from each side. This MoU will play a seminal role in enabling Indian and Israeli enterprises to undertake joint R&D projects leading to development of innovative technologies and products that have potential for commercial application.

Recognising the importance of fostering wide ranging knowledge-business partnership for industries, R&D institutions and government agencies from both countries, Israel warmly welcomed India’s offer to be the "Partner Country" for the annual Technology Summit to be held in India in 2018.

Both leaders welcomed the ongoing cooperation between the Israel Space Agency (ISA) and the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO). They expressed satisfaction over the signing of three MoUs and Plan of Cooperation in the areas of Cooperation in Atomic Clocks; GEO-LEO Optical Link; Academic collaboration and Electric propulsion for small satellites which would further enhance cooperation between the two countries. They also encouraged the two Space Agencies to further enhance the growing relationship for mutual benefit. The two leaders acknowledged that the recent launching by ISRO of an Israeli nano satellite is an important milestone in this arena.
The Prime Ministers noted with satisfaction that both sides have agreed to upgrade their scientific and technological collaboration by supporting joint research and development projects in the cutting edge areas, including ‘Big Data Analytics in Health Care’. They directed the India-Israel Joint Committee on Science and Technology to explore the possibility of further advancement of scientific collaboration including setting up of Networked Centres of Research Excellence in the cutting edge areas of mutual strength and interest.

Reaffirming the importance of bilateral defence cooperation over the years, it was agreed that future developments in this sphere should focus on joint development of defence products, including transfer of technology from Israel, with a special emphasis on the 'Make in India' initiative.

India and Israel are committed to promote security and stability in cyberspace on both the governmental and private levels. The Prime Ministers emphasized the importance of enhanced dialogue between their national cyber authorities and expressed their commitment to expand and accelerate their cooperation in this sphere including laying a mutual roadmap for its implementation. Both sides also recognize the value of enhancing and further institutionalising their broad-based cooperation on cyber issues through a Framework for cooperation in the area of cyber security.

Recognizing that terrorism poses a grave threat to global peace and stability, the two Prime Ministers reiterated their strong commitment to combat it in all its forms and manifestations. They stressed that there can be no justification for acts of terror on any grounds whatsoever. The leaders asserted that strong measures should be taken against terrorists, terror organizations, their networks and all those who encourage, support and finance terrorism, or provide sanctuary to terrorists and terror groups. They also underscored the need to ensure that terrorist organizations do not get access to any WMD or technologies. Both leaders also committed to cooperate for the early adoption of the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism (CCIT).

Both leaders reaffirmed their commitments as envisaged in the agreement on cooperation on Homeland and Public Security and encouraged the various Working Groups to implement the agreement in an efficient and effective manner.

The two Prime Ministers underlined the importance of enhanced collaboration in the field of Higher Education and Research and agreed to promote this through relevant agreements and the Joint Research Grant Programme.

Noting the importance of growing people to people contacts between India and Israel, the two leaders agreed to facilitate the promotion of travel & tourism in both directions, including through the further enhancement of air links between India and Israel.

Appreciating the contribution of the Jewish community in India and Jews of Indian origin in Israel in bringing the two societies closer, Prime Minister Modi announced the opening of an Indian Cultural Centre in Israel. This was warmly welcomed by Prime Minister Netanyahu who expressed his deep respect for Indian culture and recalled Israel’s strong support and sponsorship of PM Modi’s initiative to promote the practice of Yoga by designating June 21 as International Yoga Day.
The two Prime Ministers recognized the contribution of Indian care-givers in Israel and expressed their intention to reach a mutually agreed-upon arrangement which will provide for their continued arrival in a regulated manner.

The two Prime Ministers discussed the developments pertaining to the Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process. They underlined the need for the establishment of a just and durable peace in the region. They reaffirmed their support for an early negotiated solution between the sides based on mutual recognition and security arrangements.

**During the visit, the following Agreements were signed:**

i. MoU between the Department of Science & Technology, India and National Technological Innovation Authority, Israel for setting up of India-Israel Industrial R&D and Technological Innovation Fund (I4F).


v. Plan of Cooperation Between the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) and the Israel Space Agency (ISA) regarding cooperation in Atomic Clocks.

vi. MoU between the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) and the Israel Space Agency (ISA) regarding cooperation in GEO-LEO Optical Link.

vii. MoU between the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) and the Israel Space Agency (ISA) regarding cooperation in Electric Propulsion for Small Satellites.

Prime Minister Modi thanked the people and Government of Israel for their gracious hospitality and extended a warm invitation to Prime Minister Netanyahu to visit India at a mutually convenient time. Prime Minister Netanyahu accepted the invitation.