

# THE 14<sup>TH</sup> INDIA ISRAEL FORUM

— 8–9 DECEMBER 2021 —

*A Report*



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## Executive Summary

The 14th annual meeting of the India-Israel Forum was held virtually 8th & 9th December 2021. The Forum was co-convened by the Ananta Aspen Centre, Confederation of Indian Industry and Tel Aviv University. This edition of the Forum reflected on past efforts as well as recent developments to strengthen the bilateral relationship; and deliberated on measures to be taken to secure a sustainable future and bolster the relationship. Key government officials, stakeholders, academics, and experts from India and Israel discussed contemporary challenges and brainstormed to find innovative methods to deepen the bilateral relations. Over the last two years, the global environment has undergone profound changes in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. The last year saw dramatic improvements in relations between India and Israel through high level political visits on both sides. The recent visits saw the initiation of bilateral trade talks and the promise of further elevating the relationship. This gathering took place just weeks ahead of the 30th anniversary of the establishment of formal diplomatic ties.

Against this backdrop, the Forum focused on Global & Regional Dynamics, Research & Technology and Education & Skills Development, and the Forward Looking Economic Partnership between the two countries. As in the previous years, the Forum constituted one Expert Group meeting. This year the focus was cyber security.

The Expert Group meeting on cyber security focused on identifying a tangible result that would provide a

first line of defence, on an organizational as well as national level. A prevention mechanism against cyber crime and cyber attacks was identified as a crucial area for collaboration between the two countries. The third edition of the India Israel Online Masterclass Series on Emerging Technologies began in November 2021 and has received tremendous feedback from its first two sessions. This series aims to promote academic linkages between India and Israel by enhancing technical skills and knowledge of Indian students. The two sessions, conducted by the faculty members of Tel Aviv University, have garnered positive responses from the students at various technical universities in India.



## Opening Session

India and Israel have been trusted partners throughout the years. Next year, the two countries will mark the 30th anniversary of their diplomatic relations. While the friendship between the two countries remains as strong as it has always been, there is a need to maintain the momentum. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the leaders of the two countries have had limited physical contact but and effort should be made next year to change that.

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar recently visited Israel and met with Israel's top leaders to jointly prepare a roadmap for the future. The discussions focused on strengthening strategic connections as well as exploring new areas of bilateral collaboration. This trip to Israel occurred at a critical time. In the Middle East, several countries have seen new opportunities arise from the changing geopolitical dynamics in the aftermath of Israel's historic 2020 Abraham Accords, which were signed with the UAE and Bahrain.

Both India and Israel are committed to maximizing efforts to enhance bilateral relations in a number of areas, including academia, business, healthcare, big data, energy, and cyber security. The two countries should work together to facilitate academic and business interactions while also strengthening economic ties.

Collaboration in new emerging technologies should be explored. Incorporating Israel's neighbouring countries, such as Saudi Arabia and the UAE, in the strategic cooperation with India has been considered

but more needs to be done in this respect. In May 2021, India, Israel, and the UAE signed their first trilateral deal in the renewable energy sector. Aside from that, the three countries could engage in other areas such as defence co-production, industrial cooperation, artificial intelligence, innovation, space technology, and so on.



## Report Back Session

### Report Back of the Cyber Expert Group Meetings

The lines between the virtual and physical worlds are diminishing rapidly. Nearly every second company in India has experienced a cyber security breach in the last one year. Only 71% of the organizations who had a breach actually admitted it, but there are so many who still do not prefer to talk about it. The Israeli government is very keen to work with India on a cyber crisis management plan that it has formulated.

A meeting with a group of experts from India and Israel was convened earlier in November 2021. The crux of the discussions were on the cyber security opportunity for both Indian and Israeli industry and for cyber experts from both sides to create a tangible platform. The discussions centered on the urgency for a strong prevention mechanism against cyber crime and cyber attacks. This mechanism would act as a national and organizational first line of defence. Following that, we hope to come up with very specific products, services and platforms which will be available to Indian and Israeli industry. These could range from things such as cyber risk assessment, a cyber audit and so on.

Most large companies take cyber security risk automation for granted. However, small companies struggle because they are underequipped. In case of a system hijack, SME's have nowhere to turn to. It is imperative to understand the cyber security preparedness of small and mid-sized organizations to help identify the corrective measures they should

take. Subsequently, we should also help SME's implement those measures since they typically do not have full time expertise in cyber security.

National organisations would help these companies get the best possible cyber defence. The first proposal is for India to use Israel's experience by collaborating with various organizations. The second proposal is partially top down and partly bottom up, because it requires effort and funding. In addition to the time and money, we would also need companies that provide cyber capabilities.

There's a lot of work going on at all strategic levels as well as with industry. Given the geopolitical circumstances facing the world today, it is only a matter of time before our companies come together. The question of the hour is whether we can make this business model self-sustaining because government funding can jumpstart it but a self-sustaining model is required underneath it.



## Session Two:

### Global & Regional Dynamics and India Israel Relationship

When discussing Israel's defence systems, it is necessary to acknowledge Israel's reliance on and alignment with the United States. To deal with the environment around them, Israelis must seek US assistance in gaining access to technology and accelerating their overall digital process. The Israeli alignment with the US on defence presents a significant opportunity for India and opens the door to collaboration in areas such of technology. In today's world, the Israeli economy is all about technology, and prospective areas of technological partnership could include cyber, quantum computing, and semi-conductors.

Considering the trajectory of developments in the Persian Gulf, the possibility of establishing a regional security alliance emerges. With the assistance of American leadership, this alliance could be formed with Israel's neighboring countries. However, in order for this to be a success, it must concentrate on areas of shared interest and keep in mind the sensitivities of each of these parties. This would then open up another avenue for collaboration with third-party countries.

The coming together of India, the UAE, the United States, and Israel is unparalleled. The four countries could collaborate on strategic technologies and infrastructure, bringing their unique capabilities and values to the table. They should consider selecting a couple of national-level initiatives. To accelerate the process, the private sector should also be involved.

India and Israel have a clear future path, with opportunities to engage on cutting-edge technology, artificial intelligence, and water. There is no other friend or partner that Israel refers to as a "strategic partner." Water should, without a question, be a top priority, not just because of its potential, but also because of its needs. Working together on dairy and agriculture goes beyond food security since this could impact the lives of millions of people. It is also critical to resume physical contact between the two countries, as there is no alternative.

When looking at domestic structures in Middle Eastern countries, it is clear these societies have generally been societies with differential rights rather than equal rights. Religion, not language, established collective identity in this part of the world. Looking at the current scenario, it can be seen that the modernization of 19th-20th century westernized style education and secularization has had very limited success. Furthermore, what is currently taking place in the region is the result of this failed process. We are witnessing the resurgence of political Islam, which will eventually lead to the collapse of democracy and secularism.

In conclusion, there are a wide range of opportunities for India and Israel to collaborate on, along with the UAE and the US, as well as to assist other third countries. It is also vital to understand the domestic developments of these countries in order to better assess the situation and their needs.



## Session Three:

### Research & Technology and Education & Skills Development

There is a lot of promise in India-Israel ties, and there are several areas that could be explored in the future.

The strengthening of academic collaboration between the two countries is vital for the new era of India Israel relations and it needs to grow exponentially. Linking academic and industry will go a long way toward boosting ties between the two countries, which in turn will lead to successful forward-looking partnerships and economic collaboration in the future. The governments of both countries have a lot to do in this field. The New Education Policy and New Research Foundation further enable both countries to collaborate in a scalable manner.

The two countries' relationship has focused on developing knowledge-based engagement, which includes collaboration in innovation and research, as well as bolstering the 'Make in India' initiative. Tel Aviv University (TAU) is eager to increase its collaboration with academic institutions and enterprises in order to strengthen bilateral ties as the two countries celebrate thirty years of diplomatic relations next year.

In recent years, there has been a deepening of ties between Tel Aviv University and IIT Madras. The Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi (IIT Delhi) and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (HUJI) in Israel have also collaborated to promote interdisciplinary teaching and research in fields such as biomedical science and computer science. Approximately 2,000

Indian students are now studying in Israel, with nearly half of them being post-doctoral fellows. Another significant partnership priority is student exchange, which will allow students to benefit from academic and entrepreneurial backgrounds of both the countries.

Collaboration on research and enterprise is another area with a lot of potential. India and Israel must work together on multidisciplinary issues such as sustainability, climate change, disaster management, food security, management, quantum physics, biology, and water. Meetings and workshops should be held in both countries; this would be the footprint of science and technology collaboration. These sessions will undoubtedly help to strengthen connections between the two countries. These partnerships between the two countries would be extremely beneficial to both parties. However, there is a need for further investment from both countries.

Universities play an important role in strengthening bilateral relations. While there has been increased cooperation in the higher education field in recent years, the challenges remains how both countries could scale it up by exploring new areas like AI, Quantum sciences, life-sciences, nanosatellites and advanced materials. Furthermore, creation of multilateral (tri-lateral and quadrilateral) joint research projects, drawing in partners from the two respective Quads (Japan-Australia-India and USA & India-UAE-Israel-USA) and countries like the UK could be vital for bilateral cooperation.



## Session Four:

### Forward Looking Economic Partnership

The concept of economic partnership must be considered in the context of a world substantially disrupted by Covid. While several large companies have done exceptionally well during this period, owing mostly to the excess liquidity injected into the system, we have also seen a dramatic shift of industries, owing to the increased need for digitization.

Now, when we discuss economic collaboration, it is critical to consider the ramifications of democracies dealing with increased inequality. This heightened level of inequality is caused by a lack of employment opportunities and a widening wealth disparity, both of which must be addressed urgently in some way.

There are several possibilities for collaboration in the sectors of research & development activities, academic, business, and people-to-people relations. The people-to-people connect is a real metric for determining the India-Israel relationship and its functioning. The higher the emphasis placed on the individual, the greater the impact on bilateral ties at all levels.

Youth aspirations are quite high. It is critical that these aspirations are translated into opportunities, and that efforts are made to increase digitization and decarbonization. This would open up several prospects for the two countries to interact on a business-to-business level. Simultaneously, academic institutions should be brought into the

picture, which would result in new research being distributed across different institutions. This would result in the formation of an innovative ecosystem involving industries and educational institutions.

The government should play an active role in facilitating this coordination between the two countries. It is critical that the government creates a forum where businesspeople can see the value of collaboration. This can only happen if businesspeople meet and connect with one another in order to produce something meaningful. Offering real solutions, such as holding seminars between the two nations' business and academic groups and then following up, would be a significant accomplishment in this area. When significant people with diverse backgrounds and knowledge come together, the number of projects and joint ventures increases.

While progress on the free trade agreement and the investment treaty is being made, it is critical to expand capital flows between the two countries, both in the capital market and on an individual level. This will be a significant step forward in the development of economic relations between the two countries. Individuals and corporations in India and Israel must invest in and reach out to the startup ecosystem. To make this happen, a standard platform of KYC and other institutional metrics that allows for more transparency must be established.

Solar energy, renewable energy, and the semiconductor initiative should be high priorities for both countries. While the two countries have a strong agreement on agriculture and water technology,



## Concluding Session

greater effort should be made to include subnational actors in a comprehensive manner. Technology transfer and absorption are critical at all levels. At the same time, the manufacturing sector should be targeted by both countries since it offers huge opportunities for collaboration. Collaboration on intellectual property rights has a lot of possibilities as well. Creating industrial corridors in India could help Israeli enterprises in connecting to global supply chains. Expanding on the idea of venture funds, with the help of governments these could also play a significant role in providing capital to the highly vibrant startup sector in the digital space. There is plenty that the two countries can focus on and accomplish together, and there is still potential for an increased level of cooperation between India and Israel.



The India Israel bilateral relationship has flourished in the twenty-first century. It has experienced increased momentum over the last year. Some of the problems that loom large in India, whether it has to do with water, agriculture, crop productivity, climate change & resilience, education at different levels, etc. can be mitigated or eliminated if India and Israel collaborate on these fronts. To bring together all of the discussions over the last 14 years, we need much greater publicity and an enhanced knowledge outreach. The challenges Israel faced in its political sphere and how it efficiently managed to find solutions within those constraints should be a learning for India. In addition to that, several gaps are existent in different sectors. For instance, there is a high people-to-people connect in the education sector but a lack in the institution-to-institution connect. Similar gaps need to be tackled in smaller groups with the eventual goal of addressing these issues on a wider platform.



## List of Participants

### Special Invitees

- 1. Subrahmanyam Jaishankar**  
*Minister of External Affairs,  
Government of India*
- 2. Yair Lapid**  
*Minister of Foreign Affairs and, Alternate  
Prime Minister Government of Israel*
- 3. Alon Ushpiz**  
*Director General,  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs*
- 4. K. Vijay Raghavan**  
*Principal Scientific Adviser to  
the Government of India*

### Israeli Delegation

- 1. Stanley Bergman**  
*Co-Chair, India Israel Forum and  
CEO & Chairman of Henry Schein*
- 2. Aharon Fogel**  
*Co-Chair, India Israel Forum and Chairman,  
GreenOnyx*
- 3. Adiv Baruch**  
*Chairman, Israel Export Institute*
- 4. Ram Fishman**  
*Founder, NITSAN, Sustainable Development  
Lab, Tel Aviv University*
- 5. Naor Gilon**  
*Israeli Ambassador to India*
- 6. Dina Gidron**  
*Pears Foundation*
- 7. Leo Leiderman**  
*Professor (Emeritus) at the Berglas School of  
Economics and Visiting Professor at the Coller  
School of Management, Tel-Aviv University;  
Chief Economic Advisor of Bank Hapoalim*
- 8. Ron Malka**  
*Director General, Ministry of Economy and  
Industry, Government of Israel*
- 9. Israel Makov**  
*Chairman, Biolight Life Sciences Ltd and  
Chairman, Sun Pharma*
- 10. Ariel Porat**  
*President, Tel Aviv University*
- 11. Milette Shamir**  
*Vice President- International,  
Tel Aviv University*

**12. Ophir Shoham**

*Managing Partner,  
Axon Ventures*

**13. Asher Susser**

*Senior Fellow, Moshe Dayan Center for  
Middle Eastern Studies, Tel Aviv University*

**14. Eli Tidhar**

*Head of Monitor Deloitte  
Israel*

**15. Yigal Una**

*Director General,  
Israel National Cyber Directorate*

**16. Giora Yaron**

*Chairman of Board, Itamar Medical*

**17. Yaffa Zilbershats**

*Former Chair, Planning & Budgeting  
Committee, Israeli Council of Higher  
Education*

**India Delegation****1. Jamshyd N Godrej**

*Co-Chair, India Israel Forum,  
Chairman, Ananta Centre and Chairman  
& Managing Director, Godrej and Boyce  
Manufacturing Company Limited*

**2. Nikhil Sawhney**

*Co-Chair, India Israel Forum,  
Managing Director, Triveni Turbine Limited  
and Director, Triveni Engineering and  
Industries Limited*

**3. Umang Bedi**

*Co-founder, VerSe Innovation,  
Dailyhunt & Josh Apps*

**4. Ashok K. Bhattacharya**

*Editorial Director,  
Business Standard*

**5. Dipanjan Roy Chaudhury**

*Diplomatic Editor,  
The Economic Times*

**6. Pramit Pal Chaudhuri**

*Foreign Editor, Hindustan Times and  
Distinguished Fellow & Head, Strategic  
Affairs, Ananta Aspen Centre*

**7. Srijoy Das**

*Senior Counsel,  
G & W Legal, India*

**8. Sujith Haridas**

*Deputy Director General,  
Confederation of Indian Industry*

**9. KRS Jamwal**

*Executive Director,  
Tata Industries*

**10. K Ananth Krishnan**

*Chief Technology Officer,  
Tata Consultancy Services*

**11. Rohtash Mal**

*Chairman & MD, EM3 Agri Services*

**12. Rajan Navani**

*Vice Chairman & Managing Director,  
Jetline Group of Companies, India*

**13. Kiran Pasricha**

*Chief Executive Officer,  
Ananta Aspen Centre and Ananta Centre*

**14. Pranab Dhal Samanta**

*Deputy Executive Editor,  
The Economic Times*

**15. Navtej Sarna**

*Former Ambassador of India to Israel*

**16. Parag Shah**

*Managing Partner, Mahindra Partners*

**17. Ravi Singh**

*Secretary General and CEO,  
World Wildlife Fund – India*

**18. Sanjeev Singla**

*Ambassador of India to Israel*

**19. Salil Singhal**

*Chairman Emeritus, PI Industries*

**20. S. Sudarshan**

*Deputy Director,  
Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay*

**21. Shankar Vanavaryar**

*President, Kumaraguru Institutions*



## Photo Gallery



*H.E. Isaac Herzog, President of Israel, Addressing the Forum Participants*



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