

16TH INDIA-ISRAEL FORUM

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REPORT

16th India-Israel Forum Report

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Brief on the Working Group on India-Israel Quantum Communications and Photonic Technologies Cooperation Meeting

DR. ABHAY KARANDIKAR delivered the key note and opening address at the India-Israel Quantum Cooperation Meeting, co-chaired by Mr. Ajai Chowdhry (Chairman of the National Quantum Mission Governing Board) and Prof. Yaron Oz, convened academic and industry leaders from both countries. Participants represented leading institutions: The Weizmann Institute, Tel Aviv University, Ben Gurion University, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, IISC, IIT Madras, TIFR, ISRO, DST (represented by Dr. JVB Reddy). Delegates held two complementary working sessions, one on quantum communication (free-space and fiber QKD, networks and repeaters) and one on photonic quantum computation (single-photon sources, gates, measurement, and PIC fabrication and packaging). The participants agreed to pursue the establishment of a joint India-Israel Center of Excellence as the standing institutional anchor for the cooperation, together with two flagship projects: a joint quantum communication network, spanning a satellite QKD payload, ground stations in both countries, free-space-to-fiber gateways, and quantum repeaters, and the joint construction of a photonic quantum computation unit integrating single-photon sources, quantum gates, and measurement, alongside the definition of a concrete use case to anchor and demonstrate its value. These outcomes, with named working-group leads to be confirmed, will be developed into the joint blueprint for adoption by the wider India-Israel Forum.

Session 1 : What Comes Next in a U.S-Iran-Israel Confrontation?

- » Global assumptions are shifting rapidly, and older structures such as the transatlantic relationship that anchored American foreign policy since the Second World War are no longer as relevant as they once were.
- » While there is no consensus on American foreign policy, both progressive Democrats and the MAGA movement

share an isolationist instinct that resists sending American resources or troops abroad, which has direct implications for security guarantees in West Asia and other regions.

- » Israel has been engaged in conflict on multiple fronts, including Iran, Gaza and Lebanon, for close to three years, and panellists assessed that a durable long-term resolution is unlikely, though a short-term agreement on Iran's nuclear enrichment and inspections regime is seen as the most probable near-term outcome.
- » India, as a middle power, is seeking to work with other middle powers such as Japan to stabilise parts of the international system, since neither the United States nor China is seen as committed to preserving the existing global order.
- » The Gulf region is seen as fragmenting into competing centres of power around Iran, the UAE and Saudi Arabia.
- » India is viewed as increasingly integrated into West Asia through its expatriate population, trade, energy dependence, and infrastructure investments including IMEC.
- » BRICS was described as a largely theoretical grouping given the rivalry within it, with India and Brazil (taking a more ambivalent position) having resisted Chinese-led moves toward a common currency or payment system aimed at de-dollarisation.
- » The Abraham Accords have shown resilience through the recent war, with diplomatic ties surviving even as ambassadors were temporarily withdrawn, but the unresolved Palestinian political question remains a key issue.
- » IMEC was described as more feasible as a concept or as a set of bilateral segments (such as UAE-India or Oman-India connectivity) than as a single continuous corridor requiring the participation of many governments, including Saudi Arabia. Ambitious multilateral government-led infrastructure projects are difficult to execute, and that success is more likely when governments create the framework and then step back to let the private sector drive implementation.
- » Energy security emerged as a major theme, with India's

dependence on Gulf oil, gas and LPG imports creating vulnerability, alongside a recommendation to build larger strategic petroleum reserves and to accelerate diversification into renewable energy, including collaborative Israel-India research on agrivoltaic technology that combines solar power generation with agricultural land use.

- » Overlooked long-term risks include the United States' uncertain long-term commitment to the Middle East, rising antisemitism in the West, China's expanding influence, and the eventual decline of the Gulf's importance as a hydrocarbon supplier as sources diversify globally.

Session 2 : Building the India-Israel Chip Partnership

- » India's semiconductor journey began in 1976 with the government-owned Semiconductor Laboratory, which was built with early Israeli technology support. Although India lagged behind in this area, a revitalised approach with the India Semiconductor Mission has led to the approval of twelve projects, including its first commercial fabrication unit in Gujarat.
- » A NITI Aayog report envisions India capturing 120 to 150 billion of the global semiconductor value chain by 2035, aiming for a top-three position in advanced packaging and 35 to 50 percent self-sufficiency in chip manufacturing. International collaboration in this area has recently increased, including with PSMC from Taiwan, Tokyo Electron from Japan, ASML from Netherlands, and so on.
- » Israel's semiconductor ecosystem was built primarily around design talent drawn from strong academic institutions, and speakers stressed that talent, not capital, has always been the binding constraint, citing examples such as Intel and Nvidia locating major design centres in Israel because of its talent pool.
- » Quantum computing was identified as a promising area for collaboration because it relies on many of the same materials and fabrication processes as conventional semiconductors, meaning existing infrastructure could be repurposed relatively quickly.
- » Other suggested areas of cooperation included system-on-chip design, networking chips, artificial intelligence engines, electronic design automation tools and verification, and security-related intellectual property such as quantum cryptography and quantum key distribution.
- » Equipment design, particularly next-generation tools beyond what companies like ASML or KLA currently supply, was flagged as a strategic vulnerability for India, since dependence on a small number of foreign suppliers such as Taiwan, China or the United States poses supply chain risk.

- » India's policy environment was described as reasonably supportive through design-linked incentive schemes, presumptive taxation which enables a foreign company which is transferring technology to an Indian company to have tax predictability, and upfront capital subsidies.
- » Israeli companies tend to be strong in research, design and innovation but weaker in large-scale manufacturing, while India's challenge is building an end-to-end ecosystem covering design, fabrication, assembly, testing and packaging.
- » A recurring theme was that China remains the easiest and cheapest place to manufacture because of direct government support, and that India and Israel need to shift their relationship from simple supply chain participation toward higher-value co-creation between startups and mature industry players.
- » The biggest common challenge for semiconductor startups is producing commercially viable products at competitive cost, and that Israel-India collaboration on commercialisation, rather than only research and development, would be valuable.
- » Education and talent development were repeatedly described as the foundation for all other collaboration, with both governments encouraged to invest jointly in academic partnerships that feed the design and manufacturing pipeline.

Session 3 : Talent is the New Strategic Resource

- » India and Israel were framed as two ancient civilisations now finding renewed practical relevance, moving the relationship from largely one-way flows of ideas and expertise toward a genuinely two-way partnership in education, research and mobility.
- » Small, targeted government funding mechanisms have historically had an outsized effect, with the India-Israel Industrial R&D and Technological Innovation Fund cited as a programme that creates a domino effect by linking postdoctoral researchers, university labs and eventual joint ventures between companies in both countries.
- » India's outbound international student mobility is undergoing a major shift, with roughly half a million students a year now choosing destinations beyond the traditional big four of the United States, Canada, United Kingdom and Australia, which was described as a significant and underexploited opportunity for Israeli universities.
- » European mobility programmes such as Erasmus have become largely closed to Israeli students and academics due to boycott-related pressure, making India an increasingly important alternative destination and partner for both student and faculty exchange.
- » Tuition at leading Israeli universities such as Tel Aviv University, the Technion and Ben-Gurion University was described as far cheaper than comparable Western

institutions while offering similarly strong international recognition, positioning Israel as an attractive and underused option for Indian families.

- » Efforts to attract Israeli students to India, such as a fully funded semester-abroad programme saw no uptake, suggesting that India is not yet on the radar of young Israelis as an academic destination and that new models are needed, potentially linking study abroad to concrete career and corporate outcomes.
- » There was discussion of creating a coordinating body or consortium, similar to Japan's multi-ministry approach, to bring together Israeli and Indian universities, ministries and companies around a shared strategy, given that India's scale means there is room for many Israeli universities to engage without direct competition.
- » Talent mobility between the two countries includes not only students but also blue- and grey-collar workers, and a government target to raise the number of Indians in Israel toward 330,000 by 2030. Indian workers currently in Israel work across caregiving, construction and services.
- » A coordinating body, the Global Skills Mobility Association of India, has been established to bring together recruitment, skilling, language and cultural training providers, for circular mobility across sectors.
- » There is a need to build talent and diaspora networks. The Indus Entrepreneurs (TiE), a global network of Indian-origin entrepreneurs, was highlighted as a model Israel could replicate to connect its own diaspora and returning professionals worldwide.
- » There is a strategic opening to develop academic exchange in the humanities, including Sanskrit, Hindi and Indian philosophy taught at Israeli universities such as Tel Aviv University, alongside stronger science and technology collaboration, since cultural and civilisational interest was seen as reinforcing longer-term ties.
- » Both countries face distinct demographic pressures, with India possessing a very large working-age population and Israel facing an ageing global market elsewhere, suggesting mobility, training and job-linked education models can address demographic and skills gaps for both sides.

Session 4 : Defence and Security Synergy

- » The India-Israel defence relationship dates back informally to 1994 with a secret diplomatic overture ahead of formal ties, and deepened through crises such as India's 1998 nuclear tests, when Israel remained supportive, and the 1999 Kargil conflict, where Israeli equipment such as the Litening targeting pod played a significant operational role.
- » Despite decades of political investment, the relationship has remained too focused on defence trade rather than long-term strategic partnership, and India currently has

no major joint defence project with Israeli companies at the scale it has with Western partners such as Boeing, Lockheed or Airbus.

- » A military renaissance is underway globally, driven less by new platforms and more by technological innovation in artificial intelligence, space, cyber, drones and autonomous systems, with combat capabilities in conflicts evolving on cycles of weeks rather than years.
- » Five collaborative pathways were proposed for India and Israel: space-based persistent surveillance, offensive and defensive cyber capability, software-defined and algorithmic warfare, next-generation air defence systems such as directed-energy weapons, and joint innovation units modelled on Israel's elite technology units.
- » Venture capital investment in defence technology, once avoided by investors, has become an active and growing trend in both Israel and India, alongside government programmes such as the DRISHTI (Dual-use Robust India-Israel High-Tech Innovation) between Israel's Directorate of Defence Research and Development and India's T-Hub to support startup-driven defence innovation.
- » Israel and India signed a strategic memorandum of understanding in November 2025 covering deep tech, artificial intelligence and cyber cooperation, alongside a security agreement and a secrecy protocol signed around Prime Minister Modi's visit, described as steps that expand the scope of technology that can be shared between the two countries.
- » The Joint Resilience Initiative, promoted at the level of both prime ministers, is intended to ensure India and Israel can support one another during crises, conflict or war through joint production, procurement and development of critical capabilities, reflecting lessons from recent conflicts where other partners did not stand by Israel.
- » It was agreed that both countries should move beyond simple defence trade toward shared intellectual property, co-production and joint marketing, potentially targeting exports to third countries, since Israel offers technological depth while India offers manufacturing scale and lower cost.
- » Drones and counter-drone systems were flagged as an urgent and underdeveloped area of cooperation, with Israeli speakers acknowledging the country currently lacks an adequate solution despite mounting casualties from drone attacks, and describing this as an area where collaboration with India could be mutually beneficial.
- » University-based research was identified as the quiet foundation of defence innovation in Israel, with civilian research such as work behind the Iron Dome system originating in university laboratories, prompting comparisons to a shift some described as civil-military fusion replacing the older concept of dual-use technology.
- » Intellectual property as traditionally understood is

becoming less relevant given how quickly software and hardware are updated in modern conflict, citing reformed Western procurement timelines that now compress major system delivery to about three years and software or AI updates to as little as three months.

Session 5 : Scaling the India-Israel Deep Tech Frontier

- » The quantum working group agreed to establish an umbrella institutional structure — India-Israel Centre of Excellence to coordinate people, laboratories and shared roadmaps for quantum collaboration.
- » Two flagship projects were agreed: a joint quantum communication network linking India and Israel through satellite-based and fibre-based quantum key distribution, and a joint photonic quantum computation unit, both targeted for meaningful progress within roughly three years.
- » Quantum repeaters, which are needed to extend quantum communication over long distances without breaking the entanglement that carries the signal, and shared fabrication and packaging facilities were identified as the two central technical bottlenecks requiring joint research.
- » India already has physical quantum infrastructure taking shape, including a dedicated Quantum Valley initiative in Andhra Pradesh's new capital Amravati and a quantum foundry being built by the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research in Hyderabad, either of which could host joint facilities.
- » Indian academic quantum research is closely tied to government funding through the National Quantum Mission, therefore, government-to-government plus downstream academia industry partnership is an opportunity.
- » Emerging applications discussed included quantum-enhanced radar and sensing, quantum navigation systems that do not depend on GPS, and the intersection of quantum computing with artificial intelligence.
- » India's digital public infrastructure, including systems such as Aadhaar and the Unified Payments Interface, was highlighted as a uniquely large-scale, open and interoperable technology backbone, with speakers noting that 60 to 70 percent of the data used to train global AI models originates from India.
- » Discussion touched on financing mechanisms for high-risk deep tech investment, including proposals for joint Indian-Israeli venture funds with government risk participation.
- » Beyond quantum, drones, data science and artificial intelligence were flagged as further priority areas, while cautioning that government-to-government support cannot be the primary driver and industry must get involved.

Session 6 : India and Israel in a Shifting West Asia

- » The strong political will behind the relationship was underscored, exemplified by Prime Minister Modi's visit to Israel in February 2026 and a dense schedule of ministerial visits in both directions over the past year, alongside growing receptivity in the business community and at the societal level.
- » India's core strength in scale and engineering talent was described as complementary to Israel's strength in innovation and science and technology, a combination speakers said could be applied across virtually every sector of the relationship.
- » Defence cooperation is shifting from a buyer-seller model toward joint ventures, with both tier-one and tier-two companies increasingly involved, alongside continued negotiations toward a free trade agreement and the recent signing of a bilateral investment treaty.
- » Bilateral trade has fallen to about 3.75 billion dollars in 2025. A decline largely attributed to regional conflict, underscoring the impact of instability on economic ties.
- » Concrete steps to remove practical friction in the relationship include streamlining banking and payment processes, exploring adoption of India's Unified Payments Interface in Israel, and signing a memorandum of understanding between the two countries' stock exchange authorities to open financial investment channels.
- » Indian companies have qualified for major infrastructure tenders in Israel, including firms shortlisted for the Greater Tel Aviv Metro project, a development seen as a potential turning point that could substantially deepen people-to-people and business contact between the two countries.
- » Instability following recent conflict may reshape Gulf dynamics toward more individualised national security postures, while IMEC and I2U2 remain important frameworks that could gain renewed relevance once regional stability is restored.
- » Values intended to anchor a shared narrative for the relationship were identified as — civilisational connection, opposition to radicalism and terrorism, shared democratic values, tolerance, inclusivity and innovation.
- » Water sector cooperation was cited as an area with significant untapped potential, given India's fragmented, state-by-state water governance and the relatively high cost of Israeli technology, alongside opportunities highlighted in energy exploration, gas-based power plant construction, and healthcare innovation.
- » Coordinating the Jewish and Indian diasporas, particularly in the United States, remains an underdeveloped opportunity, given how differently organised and networked the two diaspora communities currently are.
- » Israel's priorities in terms of strategic relationships

include the United States, Germany, India, Azerbaijan, the UAE, Japan, Singapore, and Greece, reflecting a broader shift of Israeli strategic attention from Europe toward Asia and the Gulf.

- » The erosion of what was called alliance culture, in which the United States underwrote a large network of security, trade and technology alliances, is giving way to more flexible, functional and issue-specific coalitions built around specific technologies, resources or security needs rather than formal treaty alliances.
- » Diversification beyond the United States and China was a recurring theme, highlighting growing Indian defence and industrial partnerships with Europe, particularly France, Germany and the Nordic countries, alongside deepening financial ties with Canada, Singapore, UAE, and Japan.
- » India's greening of the historically arid state of Rajasthan due to shifting rainfall patterns was identified as an emerging opportunity for collaboration with Israel, given Israel's experience in reversing desertification and managing water scarcity.
- » Prospects for Saudi-Israel normalisation, considered

plausible around the time of the 2023 G20 summit in India, were assessed as having receded significantly following the October 7 attacks and the subsequent conflict, with Saudi Arabia now publicly linking normalisation to progress on a political resolution for Palestine.

- » India's approach to Iran is a case of pragmatic, interest-based bilateral diplomacy, noting that India maintains investment and connectivity interests in Iran, including the Chabahar port project, while also declining to join US-led military coalitions such as Operation Prosperity Guardian during regional shipping disruptions.
- » A recommendation was raised to develop an Indian Talpilot, modelled on Israel's elite technology-focused military talent programme, adapted in scale and selection criteria to India's much larger population and different institutional context.
- » Engagement with India should extend beyond New Delhi to individual Indian states, since many practical breakthroughs in agriculture, water and other sectors are likely to take place through state-level relationships rather than only through the national government.

Snapshots





