



India's PM Visit to Kuwait

For Prelims: [Gulf nations](#), [International Solar Alliance](#), [United Nations](#), [Gulf Cooperation Council](#), Order of Mubarak Al-Kabeer

For Mains: India's Foreign Policy and Relations with West Asia, India-Kuwait Bilateral Relations, Energy Diplomacy in India's Foreign Policy

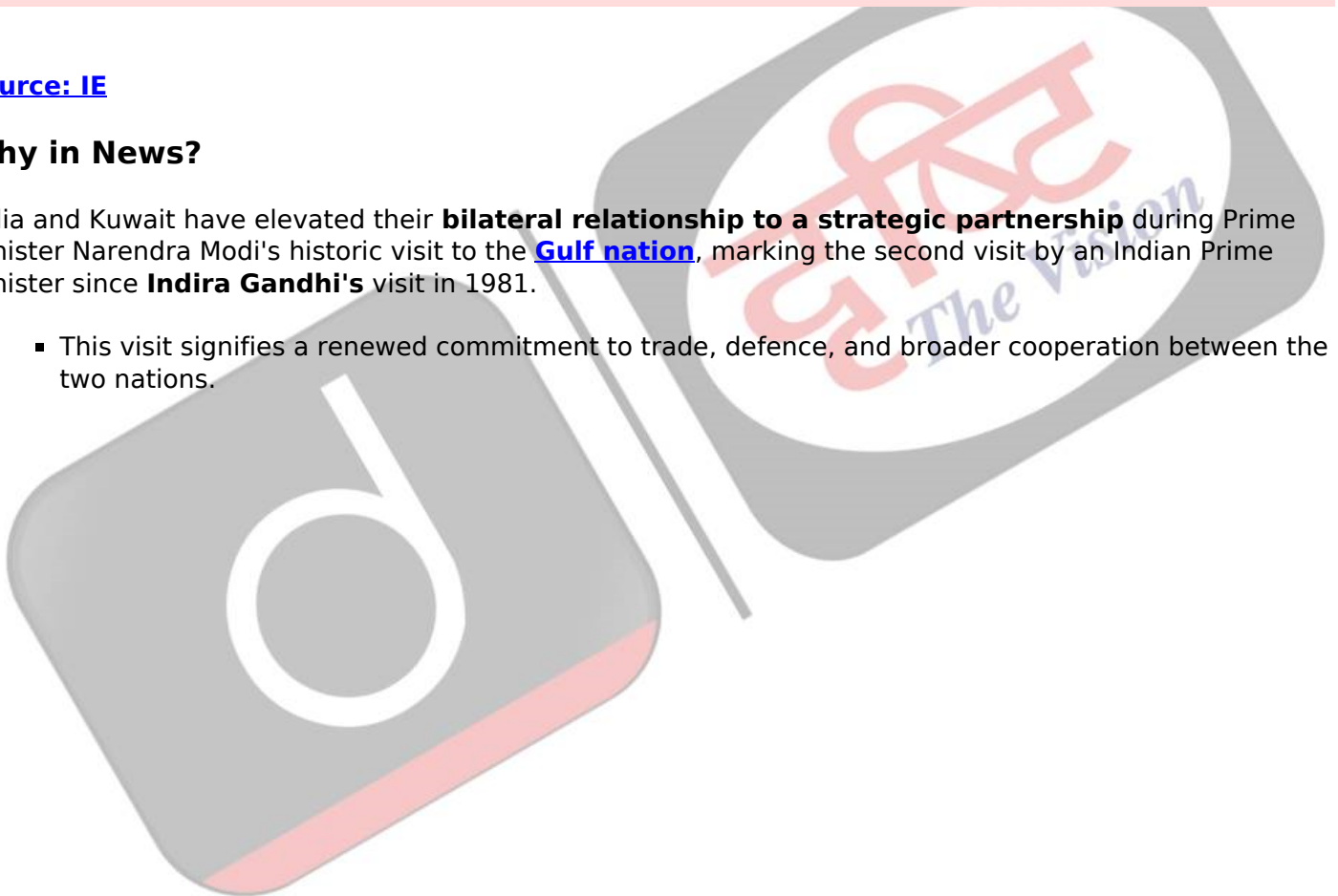
Source: [IE](#)

Why in News?

India and Kuwait have elevated their **bilateral relationship to a strategic partnership** during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's historic visit to the [Gulf nation](#), marking the second visit by an Indian Prime Minister since **Indira Gandhi's** visit in 1981.

- This visit signifies a renewed commitment to trade, defence, and broader cooperation between the two nations.

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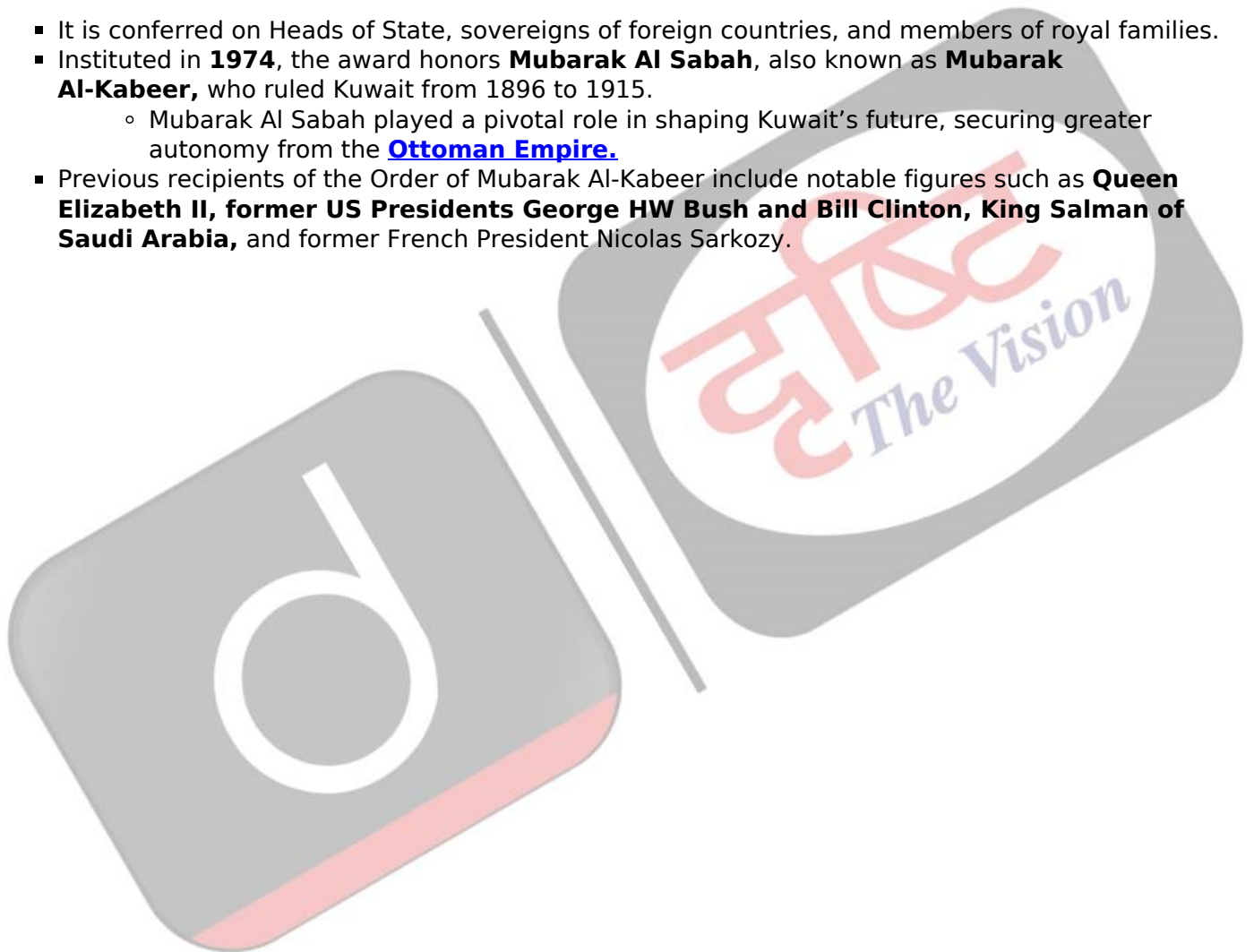
What are the Key Highlights of the PM's Visit to Kuwait?

- **Order of Mubarak Al Kabeer:** PM Shri Narendra Modi was awarded the '**Order of Mubarak Al Kabeer,**' the **highest honor of Kuwait,** in recognition of his contributions to strengthening bilateral ties.
- **Strategic Partnership:** The two sides elevated their relationship to a '**Strategic Partnership,**' expanding collaboration across political, trade, defense, energy, and cultural domains.
- **Defence Cooperation:** Signed an MoU on Defence Cooperation, focusing on joint military exercises, training, coastal defense.
- **Cultural and Sports Cooperation:** India and Kuwait signed a **Cultural Exchange Programme for 2025-2029** and an Executive Programme on Sports Cooperation for 2025-2028.
- **Joint Commission on Cooperation (JCC):** A JCC was established to monitor bilateral relations, chaired by the **Foreign Ministers of both countries.**

- New **Joint Working Groups (JWGs)** were set up in key areas such as education, trade, investments, agriculture, and **counter-terrorism**.
- **Technology and Emerging Sectors:** Emphasised collaboration in semiconductors, **artificial intelligence**, **e-Governance**, and sharing best practices.
- **Energy Cooperation:** Both sides agreed to move from a **buyer-seller relationship** to a **comprehensive partnership** in the energy sector, with a focus on oil, gas, refining, and **renewable energy**.
- **Multilateral Cooperation:** Kuwait's membership in **International Solar Alliance (ISA)** was welcomed by India.
 - The PM of India congratulated Kuwait on its **Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)** Presidency and emphasized the importance of concluding the **India-GCC Free Trade Agreement**.
 - Both leaders emphasized the need for a **reformed United Nations (UN)** to tackle **global challenges effectively**.

Order of Mubarak Al-Kabeer

- It is conferred on Heads of State, sovereigns of foreign countries, and members of royal families.
- Instituted in **1974**, the award honors **Mubarak Al Sabah**, also known as **Mubarak Al-Kabeer**, who ruled Kuwait from 1896 to 1915.
 - Mubarak Al Sabah played a pivotal role in shaping Kuwait's future, securing greater autonomy from the **Ottoman Empire**.
- Previous recipients of the Order of Mubarak Al-Kabeer include notable figures such as **Queen Elizabeth II**, former **US Presidents George HW Bush and Bill Clinton**, **King Salman of Saudi Arabia**, and former French President Nicolas Sarkozy.





Kuwait's Highest Honour

The ORDER of MUBARAK Al KABEER



20 / GLOBAL HONOURS

ONE MOMENT OF GLORY FOR
140 CRORE INDIANS!

-  2024 - Guyana's The Order Of Excellence
-  2024 - Barbados's The Order of Freedom
-  2024 - Nigeria's Grand Commander of the Order
-  2024 - Dominica's Dominica Award of Honour
-  2024 - Russia's Order of St. Andrew the Apostle
-  2023 - Greece's Grand Cross of the Order of Honour
-  2023 - France's Grand Cross of the Legion
-  2023 - Egypt's Order of the Nile
-  2023 - Republic of Palau's honour Ebakl Award
-  2023 - Papua New Guinea's the Order of Logohu
-  2023 - Fiji's prestigious Companion of the Order of Fiji
-  2021 - Bhutan's Order of the Druk Gyalpo
-  2020 - US Government's Legion of Merit
-  2019 - Bahrain's King Hamad Order of the Renaissance
-  2019 - Maldives' the Order of the Distinguished Rule of Nishan Izzuddin
-  2019 - United Arab Emirates' Order of Zayed Award
-  2018 - Palestine's the Grand Collar of the State of Palestine Award
-  2016 - Afghanistan's the State Order of Ghazi Amir Amanullah Khan
-  2016 - Saudi Arabia's Order of King Abdulaziz

How are India-Kuwait Relations?

- **Historical Ties:** India and Kuwait share a long-standing relationship, dating back to **pre-oil times** when **maritime trade** formed the foundation of Kuwait's economy.
 - The **Indian Rupee was once the legal tender in Kuwait until 1961**, emphasizing their strong economic ties.
 - Historically, Kuwait traded goods like **dates, pearls, and Arabian horses** with India. However, after the **discovery of oil**, Kuwait's economy shifted, **with oil now contributing to about 94%** of its state income.
- **Economic Partnership:** Kuwait is one of India's top trading partners, with bilateral trade valued at **USD 10.47 billion** in 2023-24.
 - **Kuwait is India's 6th largest crude oil supplier**, fulfilling **3% of the country's energy needs**.

- Indian exports to Kuwait surpassed **USD 2 billion for the first time**, reflecting growing trade ties.
- **Kuwait Investment Authority's** investments in India exceed **USD 10 billion**.
- **Indian Diaspora in Kuwait:** With a population of around 1 million, the Indian community is the **largest expatriate group in Kuwait**.
 - The community plays a vital role in the Kuwaiti economy, particularly in sectors like healthcare, engineering, retail, and business.

What is the Importance of Kuwait in India's Foreign Policy in West Asia?

- **Economic Contributions:** The remittances from Indian expatriates in Kuwait inject billions of dollars into the Indian economy, which is crucial for **economic stability and growth**.
- **Economic Collaboration: Kuwait's Vision 2035**, aimed at diversifying its economy **beyond oil**, presents opportunities for India to collaborate in emerging sectors such as renewable energy, infrastructure, and technology.
 - This aligns with India's development goals, particularly the [Viksit Bharat 2047](#).
 - Additionally, the energy security from Kuwait is vital for India's industrial **growth and domestic needs**.
- **Geopolitical Influence:** Kuwait's location in the Middle East and its role in the **GCC** make it a key player in regional politics.
 - India's engagement with Kuwait helps it maintain a balanced and influential presence in West Asia
- **Labour and Skill Development:** Kuwait's demand for a **skilled workforce, as part of its Vision 2035**, aligns with India's strengths in skill development, offering a chance for **more Indian workers to contribute to Kuwait's growth** in various sectors, such as healthcare, technology, and infrastructure.

What is the Gulf Cooperation Council?

- **About:** The GCC, established in 1981, is a regional political and economic organization consisting of six Arab states: **Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and United Arab Emirates**.
 - The GCC was established in response to regional tensions, notably the [Iranian Revolution \(1979\)](#) and the [Iraq-Iran War \(1980-1988\)](#).
 - It aims to promote unity and address shared challenges in the Gulf region.
- **Organizational Structure:** The **Supreme Council** is the **highest decision-making** body of the GCC, consisting of heads of state from each member country.
 - The **presidency of the Supreme Council rotates annually** based on the alphabetical order of member countries.
- **Headquarters:** Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.
- **India's Relations with GCC:** The GCC is a key trading and investment partner for India, with significant investments from the UAE and Saudi Arabia.
 - In FY 2023-24, India-GCC bilateral trade stood at **USD 161.59 billion**. India's exports were USD 56.3 billion and India's imports were USD 105.3 billion.
 - The GCC remains a key market for India's exports, including oil, and hosts a large Indian workforce.
 - The **UAE ranks as India's 3rd largest trading partner** and **2nd largest export destination**.
 - Around **8.9 million Indian expatriates in the GCC** contribute significantly to **remittances**, which, despite a recent decline, remain a major income source for India.

Drishti Mains Question:

In what ways do the India-Kuwait bilateral relations impact India's energy security and economic interests in the Gulf region?

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question

Prelims

Q. Which of the following is not a member of 'Gulf Cooperation Council'? (2016)

- (a) Iran
- (c) Oman
- (b) Saudi Arabia
- (d) Kuwait

Ans: (a)

Mains:

Q. The question of India's Energy Security constitutes the most important part of India's economic progress. Analyse India's energy policy cooperation with West Asian countries. (2017)

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