STUDY NOTES · BASIC CONCEPT

UAE President visits India? What is on the table?

International Relations

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The recent three-hour visit of UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan to India was characterized by symbolic gestures of "hugs, handshakes, and car diplomacy," underscoring the deepening strategic partnership between the two nations. Despite its short duration, the visit yielded significant outcomes across various sectors.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's personal reception of the UAE President at the airport and their shared car ride were highlighted as special gestures that reinforced the close personal rapport between the leaders and elevated bilateral ties beyond conventional diplomacy. This "car diplomacy," which PM Modi has previously engaged in with other global leaders, signifies a strong personal connection. The "power-packed" visit, as described by some, resulted in over a dozen agreements and announcements.

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Key outcomes included:

Strategic Defence Partnership:

A Letter of Intent was signed to establish a Strategic Defence Partnership Framework, aiming to expand cooperation in defense industry, innovation, advanced technology, training, special operations, cybersecurity, and counter-terrorism.

Economic Ties:

Both nations set an ambitious target to double bilateral trade to $200 billion by 2032, building on the $100 billion achieved in FY 2024-25. The UAE has also committed to investing $75 billion in India's infrastructure.

Energy Cooperation:

Agreements were made in the energy sector, including a long-term Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) deal and progress in civil nuclear cooperation.

Space and Technology:

A Letter of Intent was signed between IN-SPACe (India) and the UAE Space Agency for joint infrastructure development and commercialization in the space industry. Artificial intelligence (AI) was also identified as a priority area for collaboration.

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Counter-Terrorism:

The leaders unequivocally condemned all forms of terrorism, including cross-border terrorism, and emphasized that no nation should provide safe haven or support to those involved in terrorist activities.

They also agreed to continue cooperation within the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) framework to counter terror financing and strengthen anti-money laundering efforts. The brevity of the visit, initially sparking speculation, was clarified by officials as a pre-planned engagement that reflected the efficiency and high priority both India and the UAE place on their comprehensive strategic partnership.

This visit marked Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan's fifth visit to India in the last decade and his third official visit as President of the UAE, further highlighting the sustained and growing engagement between the two countries.