

UAE team to prioritise defence ties with India

INTERVIEW



Sandhya D'Mello

DUBAI — The UAE and India are consolidating bilateral ties through various economic sectors. One sector likely to be on the agenda is defence as both countries aim for peace and stability in and around the region with the immediate and extended neighbourhood.

Given the gap of less than six months after Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi toured the UAE, the visit of a high-level UAE delegation led by His Highness Shaikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, is a clear sign of endorsement of trade and political ties.

"It is very apparent that the economic and strategic relationship is entirely on track and going at a steady pace," said Paras Shahdadpuri, chairman, Nikai Group of Companies, who is heading to India with the UAE delegation.

"We expect high interest in the manufacturing sector and defence production, which can be another area of strategic cooperation where jointly manufactured defence hardware can be marketed globally."

In terms of the energy sector, projects in nuclear energy, solar energy and conventional energy could be on the agenda. Shahdadpuri said: "Wide progress in atomic energy policies and ties, defence protection and infrastructure build, particularly in the field of energy, will expand relations that UAE organisations such as DP World, etc., have with India."

The UAE is one of India's important partners in the GCC. "This visit is expected to go beyond economic relationship and bring in more beneficial outcomes. The UAE's broad commitment to give India a \$75 billion infrastructure fund is on track. The funds will be fruitfully utilised during the next five years," said Shahdadpuri.

Asked if both the countries could face hurdles in terms of implementing the UAE's investment objectives in India, he said: "I see a



The economic and strategic relationship is entirely on track

Paras Shahdadpuri,
Chairman, Nikai Group of Companies

fairly smooth sailing in implementation of the UAE's investment objectives in India. Some minor transactional road blocks may arise but given the deep cooperation between India and the UAE, there will not be any major obstacles. We will be able to see regular, high-level visits both at a political and bureaucratic level to take the strategic partnership forward."

It may be recalled that during Modi's visit in the UAE, both the countries had issued a joint statement to step up cooperation on security-related issues and to establish a strategic security dialogue to deliberate on major issues.

The UAE also conveyed to India that it will cooperate in manufacturing defence equipment in India. Both the countries will establish a dialogue between their national security advisers and national security councils. The national security advisors, together with other high-level security representatives from both nations, will meet every six months.

The two sides agreed to strengthen defence relations, including through regular exercises and training of naval, air, land and special forces, and in coastal defence. They also agreed to promote cooperation in cyber security, including prevention of cyber terrorism, radicalisation and disturbing social harmony.

The two sides will also establish points of contact between their security agencies. The UAE and India will cooperate to strengthen maritime security in the Gulf and the Indian Ocean region.

—sandhya@khaleejtimes.com