

THREE YEARS OF THE ABRAHAM ACCORDS

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To enjoy additional benefits

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September 21, 2023 01:28 am | Updated 01:42 am IST

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Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu stands with U.S. President Donald Trump after signing the Abraham Accords on the South Lawn of the White House in Washington D.C. on September 15, 2020. | Photo Credit: Reuters

This week marks an important milestone for West Asia and North Africa: three years since the signing of the [Abraham Accords](#) between Israel and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Bahrain, under the auspices of the U.S. government. Three months later, in December 2020, [Morocco joined the process](#), signing a normalisation agreement with Israel.

The catalyst that enabled these historic accords was the decision by the parties to promote a stable future for West Asia.

The agreements have ushered in a new era of normalisation and peace that not only connects governments but also brings people together, despite the differences in their language, religious beliefs, cultures and more. The Abraham Accords have also opened up exciting opportunities for India and its thriving business community, which maintains strong relations and active engagement with our nations.

So far, the Abraham Accords have offered a mere glimpse into the full potential of regional cooperation. Even so, the scope of trade between Israel and other West Asian countries increased 74% between 2021 and 2022. Another example is tourism, mostly non-existent in the past, which has skyrocketed. In 2021, visits from Israel to the UAE increased by 172%. Meanwhile, the number of Israelis flying to Bahrain since the establishment of direct flights has increased exponentially.

The enhanced regional connectivity has also brought significant benefits to the people of India. The vibrant Indian diaspora in the Gulf now has the convenience of direct flights between the UAE and Israel, as well as between Israel and Bahrain. Indian students are enjoying increased ease of travel, gaining improved access to our universities and the opportunity to explore international study programmes.

The Accords have also had a significant influence on reinforcing Israel's relations with neighbouring countries. For example, the Prosperity Green & Blue agreement between Israel, the UAE, and Jordan determined that a solar field to supply 600 megawatts of electricity to Israel would be established in Jordan, while in return, a desalination plant in Israel would deliver 200

million cubic meters of water to Jordan.

Furthermore, the Accords have laid the foundation for expanded regional and multinational cooperation, and this has resulted in a flow of economic opportunities reaching India. Notably, we have witnessed substantial commercial collaborations between companies from the UAE, Israel, Bahrain, and the U.S., partnering with the Indian private sector.

A concrete illustration of this high-level economic cooperation between our governments is the establishment of the I2U2 Group, formed by Israel, India, the UAE, and the U.S. The Abraham Accords made the I2U2 Group possible, and its primary focus will be on joint investments in critical areas such as water, energy, transportation, space, health, and food security.

In a region where 65% of the population is under 30 years of age, providing the younger generation with opportunities is a key factor in preventing instability. To that end, youth delegations have been initiated, encouraging bonds between tomorrow's leaders. Delegations in which young influencers experience each other's cultures and visit important religious and historic sites while focusing on community building are effective tools for strengthening ties.

The Abraham Accords encourage collaboration and education. In the summer of 2022, Ben-Gurion University welcomed students from Morocco. Additionally, a number of Emirati students have enrolled in Israeli universities. Bahrain has also embraced the prospects for shared educational activities and signed a number of agreements with Israel to advance student and professor exchanges.

In a notable example of how these initiatives can foster mutual understanding, after Emirati Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan visited the Yad Vashem Holocaust Remembrance Center in Jerusalem, the UAE incorporated Holocaust education into its school curriculum as a mandatory subject, attestation to the ability of the Abraham Accords to foster coexistence and religious tolerance.

The Abraham Accords have shown unity's power to inspire. They offer a window into the potential future of the region and demonstrate that when both the leaders and ordinary citizens prioritise peace and cooperation, a far better future for West Asia is possible.

Israel hopes that many more countries will join this endeavour, creating a brighter tomorrow for the sake of all our children.

India holds a significant position among our partners, and the scope of our collaboration underscores our shared interests, including championing a sustainable recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, expanding trade, addressing climate change, and countering threats to international security.

Through the concerted efforts of our countries' public and private sectors, we are poised to deliver promising outcomes for the entire world. Our nations share a special bond with India and its people, and we remain committed to realising the full potential of the Accords as partners in peace and prosperity.

Naor Gilon is Israel's Ambassador to India

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