

# Delhi should waive visas for Emiratis



INSIGHT

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Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, during his visit to the UAE, is expected to strongly present his case to UAE businesses to invest in India. With trillions of dollars in reserves, institutional and sovereign funds could flood India with investments under the right conditions to make Modi's 'Make in India' project, smart cities and other infrastructure a reality.

As Modi begins his economic reach to the UAE, India faces stiff competition from other economies that are luring the UAE investments to their countries. Earlier this year, 22 Schengen and eight non-Schengen members in Europe, opened their doors to the UAE nationals by exempting them from obtaining visas to enter their countries. This change in policy is a watershed moment, which will boost trade and commerce between the UAE and the Schengen countries.

Dubai and the UAE are leading trading destinations for Indian companies because of their progressive, business savvy, visionary and pragmatic government. The strategic and geographical location of the country is also of importance to the world economy.

The various Schengen nations, on the other hand, have been known for their innovations in almost every field of human endeavour in the modern world ranging from social sciences to technology and physical sciences. But many countries of the Schengen area or the Eurzone are battling their own economic demons. One way of getting over these hurdles is to build stronger economic connections with the UAE.

But will this affect the UAE's trade relations with one of its biggest trading partners, India?

The history of bilateral relations between India and the UAE, is nothing short of spectacular.



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Trade relations between people in the two regions have existed since 3000 BC. The two countries continue to closely cooperate in areas pertaining to prevention of money-laundering, benefits of double taxation, counter terrorism and extradition of offenders; exchange of prisoners and on a range of other issues.

The Modi government continues to look forward to the creation of a huge production base in the country and to promote India as a hub of manufacturing under the 'Make in India' campaign. However, there is still a lot of distance to be covered in view of the changing global order and tougher com-

petition, as it hopes to become a global production centre. The need, therefore, is to find new long-term, like-minded partners and make them part of the common growth story. The Indian government will do well to forge even stronger bonds with friendly nations like the UAE.

Has Europe beaten India as a destination for UAE investments? Has India lost a stable investment partner and the competitive edge because it has been slow to react? This is debatable considering that in India visa norms have also been eased and now electronically applying for visa has been extended to nationals of about 180 nations, including the UAE. But Delhi needs to do more than offering electronic visa facility to the Emiratis. The UAE has a fit and proper case for visa exemption to its nationals.

The two countries have a lot to offer each other because of their geographical proximity. For instance, while India endeavours to be a production and manufacturing hub, the UAE may provide the playing field for marketing, logistics, distribution and sale of all that is produced in India. Considering the magnitude and nature of trade relations between the two countries, the path must be made smooth for convenience of travel for the UAE nationals to India, and for greater mobility of people between the two countries.

While this country continues to welcome Indians to work, invest and comfortably reside in the UAE, the Government of India must think beyond the electronic visa application facility currently extended to the UAE nationals. A waiver of visas altogether for Emiratis will definitely be a step in the right direction — a win-win situation for both nations.

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