India - Israel Relations

1) **Introduction**
   - India and Israel are natural partners.
   - Prime Minister Narendra Modi is the first Indian Prime Minister visiting Israel after formally establishing relations with the country 25 years back.
   - This has a clear shift in Indian policy towards west Asia.
   - This is a marriage really made in heaven and we are implementing it here on Earth, declared Israel’s Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

2) **Reasons India-Israel relations are important**
   - India and Israel relations are steadily growing and have many synergies and complementarities.
   - **Defence deals**
     a. Today Israel is third largest defence supplier to India and accounts for over 40% of Israel’s defence exports.
     b. They range from Barack missiles to powerful Phalcon radar on AWACS (Airborne Warning and Control System).
   - **National security and counter-terrorism**
     a. Israel backs India’s defence against terror and also completely understood India’s nuclear tests in 1998.
     b. Mumbai attack in 2008 paved a way to creation of a joint working group to fight against terrorism.
     c. India is adopting hi-tech anti-infiltration systems and innovative tactics from Israel to safeguard its western and eastern borders.
   - **Water and agriculture**
     a. Israel has become one of the foremost technology superpowers in areas such as rainwater harvesting, use of oceanic water and using that for irrigation in the most dry land.
     b. Israel has mastered water conservation techniques and India can learn from it.
     c. It helps India to face its water stressed condition.
     d. Another area of potential cooperation is cleaning polluted rivers.
   - **Commercial trade**
     a. Commercial relations between the diamond traders in Gujarat and Israel grew from $200 million to nearly $5 billion with gems and jewellery accounting for nearly 40%.
     b. Science and technology, agriculture, biotech and space emerged as new areas of cooperation.
   - **Tourism**
     a. Tourism provided an impetus to people-to-people relations.
     b. India emerged as the preferred destination for young Israelis wanting to unwind after their compulsory military service and Hebrew signage in Varanasi, Manali and Goa
   - **Start-ups**
     a. Israel today boasts of nearly 4,500 start-ups and 140 incubators/accelerators.
     b. In a recent study, NASSCOM and Accenture estimated that cooperation with Indian start-ups has the potential to generate $5 billion within five years.
   - **Human resource**
a. Israel will be benefited from large pool of skilled Indian engineers and doctors as Mr. Netanyahu’s quoted “Indian talent and Israeli technology equals India-Israel ties for tomorrow.”

3) Recent PM visit to Israel
   • Prime Minister Narendra Modi has signed MOUs with Israel Government in the following areas
     a. Water conservation
     b. Counter terrorism cooperation
     c. Space technology – electric propulsion of small satellites.
     d. Cooperation on atomic clocks.
     e. $40mn research fund named India Israel Industrial innovation Fund is established.
   • The outcome is an impressive joint statement which elevates the relationship to a ‘strategic partnership’.
   • The joint statement talked about defence cooperation in the context of “joint development” of defence products, including transfer of technology from Israel, with a special emphasis on the ‘Make in India’ initiative.”

4) Way Forward
   • Development along with transfer of defence technology will help India.
   • India can leverage its space technologies to Israel for its developmental purposes where India enjoys upper hand.
   • An integrated approach involving government to government, government to business and business to business interactions between Indians and Israeli agencies.
   • Recently, the Delhi Government had roped in the Israeli firm to clean up an eight km stretch of the Yamuna. India can scale up the role of Israeli firms in cleaning up other rivers.
   • India could well take a cue from how Israel maintains stringent external and internal security, allowing Israeli settlements right up to the border of conflict zones.
   • India could adopt the three-layered Israeli strategy that goes beyond security to build a cyber system that is robust, resilient and has strong defence capabilities.
   • Both need to cooperate to combat growing radicalisation and terrorism, including in cyber space.