



Beyond Brick and Mortar!

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Beyond Brick and Mortar!

Opening of magnificent Hindu mandir in Abu Dhabi mark tectonic shift in India - UAE friendship that's transcended commercial, diplomatic & strategic issues.

BAPS Hindu Mandir that rose majestically in Abu Dhabi¹ is a symbol of Middle Eastern tolerance of different faiths and cross-cultural mosaic. This architectural wonder represents harmony and understanding across cultures and is much more than just a place of worship.

When Pramukh Swami Maharaj visited United Arab Emirates in 1997,² he floated the idea of building a temple in Abu Dhabi that would unite two "countries, closer together by cultures, and religions." This is how journey to the temple began. In August 2015, UAE government declared that land for a Hindu temple (mandir) would be provided in Abu Dhabi.³ The land was gifted for mandir (temple) by Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan who was then crown prince of Abu Dhabi & Deputy Supreme commander of UAE Armed force.

Presently, Al Nahyan is third President and ruler of Abu Dhabi. This gifted land⁴ by UAE for construction of Hindu mandir (temple) reflects UAE's commitment towards religious and cultural diversity. This act paved the way for strong bilateral relations, between India & United Arab Emirates.

A Mandir for the Spirit!

BAPS Hindu Mandir, which is situated off Dubai - Abu Dhabi Sheikh Zayed Highway in Abu Mureikhah next to Al Rahba is the first authentic Hindu stone mandir in Middle East that's built in accordance with Hindu vastu shashtra. On February 10, 2018, Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed al Nahyan and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi met in

¹ <https://www.baps.org/>

² <https://www.khaleejtimes.com/supplements/pramukh-swami-maharaj-the-spiritual-guru-who-envisioned-baps-hindu-mandir?amp=1>

³ <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/uae-takes-a-landmark-decision-allots-land-for-buliding-first-temple-in-abu-dhabi/>

⁴ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1632035/9-middle-east-first-hindu-stone-temple-constructed-abu-dhabi/>

the Presidential Palace with BAPS coordinators for of temple, Sadhus Ishwarcharandas and Brahmaviharidas, as well as members of the Temple Committee.

In the presence of whole royal family and more than 250 local dignitaries including ministers, government officials and military personnel, a memorandum of agreement was signed between the two countries and the temple was formally announced.

On February 11, 2018, Puja Ishwarcharan Swami, a senior swami of BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha performed first stone sanctification⁶ (Shila Pujan). A model of the stone temple that will be built was displayed in front of Indian Prime Minister and Crown Prince of United Arab Emirates. More than 1,700 Indian and Emirati dignitaries from various walks of life were present at the temple site.

BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha's spiritual head His Holiness Mahant Swami Maharaj conducted the shilanyas ceremony (foundation laying ceremony) on April 20, 2019 in front of numerous UAE ministers as well as Dr Mugheer Khamis Al Khaili, Chairman of Department of Community Development and member of Executive Council. In addition, a range of spiritual and social organizations from India, United States, the United Kingdom, Europe, Japan, Africa, China, South East Asia, Australia, and other countries graced the occasion.

Representatives from Art of Living, Chinmay Mission, Jain Samaj, Dubai Gurudwara, Brahma Kumaris, Iskcon, Ayappa Samaj, and Tamil Samaj were also present on the occasion. On 27 acres land, construction on the mandir started in December 2019.

India Pavilion at Dubai Expo 2020⁷ had this mandir (temple) as well. About 200 UAE volunteers devoted 690,000 hours to build the mandir. Opening the Hindu temple in United Arab Emirates marked the

⁵ <https://www.baps.org/News/2018/Crown-Prince-of-Abu-Dhabi-Welcomes-BAPS-Sadhus-and-Temple-Committee-12875.aspx>

⁶ <https://www.baps.org/News/2018/Prime-Minister-of-India-Shri-Narendra-Modi-Launches-Hindu-Temple-Project-12874.aspx#:~:text=On%20Sunday%2C%2011%20February%2C%20>

⁷ <https://www.baps.org/News/2021/BAPS-Hindu-Mandir-Featured-at-Expo-2020-20159.aspx>

beginning of "Festival of Harmony," an event that fosters interfaith understanding and communication, serve as a bridge between cultures and a symbol of peaceful coexistence. The temple will serve as a conduit for Indian culture.

Peace and Architectural Beauty

There is more to Hindu Mandir in Abu Dhabi than just its amazing architecture. It has been built with marble that was imported from Italy and pink sandstone from Rajasthan,⁸ which can withstand temperatures as high as 50 degrees Celsius, which is occasionally the case in UAE. Its design combines cutting-edge building methodology with traditional Indian architectural styles from the past. Fly ash is added to the concrete mix for the foundation in order to reduce its carbon footprint. A total of 350 sensors were positioned throughout the mandir and 100 sensors were employed in the foundation to monitor temperature changes, pressure changes,⁹ and seismic activity.

More than 25,000 pieces of stone were sculpted into the mandir by expert Indian artisans.¹⁰ The mandir is 262 feet long, 108 feet wide, and has 2 Ghumats (domes), 12 Samrans, 402 pillars, and 7 Shikars (spires), each of which represents one of the seven Emirates in the United Arab Emirates. Every shikar contains tales from the Bhagavatam, Mahabharata, Shiv Purana, and Ramayana. Additionally, Shikars features carvings of horses and camels that are unique and symbolize the United Arab Emirates.

With its capacity to accommodate 10,000¹¹ people that makes its West Asia largest temple. The mandir serves as a venue for prayer, community gatherings, and cultural events with all the features of traditional Hindu temple. Mandir houses Murtis of Swaminarayan, Akshar-Purushtto. Radha-Krishna, Rama-Sita, Lakshmana, Hanuman,

⁸ <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/abu-dhabis-first-hindu-temple-is-steeped-in-symbolism-9159948/>

⁹ <https://english.jagran.com/world/baps-mandir-in-abu-dhabi-deity-idol-crafted-after-year-long-research-will-take-3-hours-to-explore-temple-exclusive-10124165>

¹⁰ <https://www.cnbc18.com/photos/travel/culture/13-things-you-must-know-about-the-700-crore-hindu-temple-being-built-in-abu-dhabi-18527561.htm>

¹¹ <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/etimes/trending/everything-about-abu-dhabis-first-hindu-temple-which-pm-narendra-modi-will-inagurate/photostory/107419870.cms>

Shiva-Parvati, Ganesha, Kartikeya, Padmavati Venkateshwara, Jagannath, and Ayyappa.¹²

Harmony and Cultural Bonding

By combining cultural heritage with modern ingenuity, the Hindu Mandir stands as a beacon of harmony in the region, fostering understanding and community spirit. Inauguration events starting from February 10, 2024 with Vedic rituals concluded on February 14, 2024 with a Vedic ceremony by Mahant Swami Maharaj.

‘Yagana for Harmony’ the first global Vedic ritual in the region of UAE (West Asia) was held on February 11, 2024¹³ to seek divine blessings and for promoting harmony, tolerance and global peace. Inauguration of the Hindu Mandir on February 14, 2024 by India PM Narendra Modi along with Tolerance Minister of united Arab HE Nahyan bin Mubarak Al Nahyan acts as a catalyst for the flourishing of humanitarian values and harmony between the two countries.

A new chapter is being written in the India-UAE cooperation that will strengthen long-standing affinity & prospect for a bright future for entire community.

Mandir transcends the usual bilateral ties, nitty gritty and the associated optics!

¹² <https://english.jagran.com/world/baps-mandir-in-abu-dhabi-deity-idol-crafted-after-year-long-research-will-take-3-hours-to-explore-temple-exclusive-10124165>

¹³ <https://www.baps.org/News/2024/Day-of-Prayers-Vedic-Yagna-for-Global-Harmony-25363.aspx>

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