



# DEEPENING TIES IN INDIA-UAE HEALTH CARE

*Nearing 50 years of diplomatic relations, our two countries are determined to build a closer relationship*

BY PAVAN KAPOOR | *Special to Gulf News*

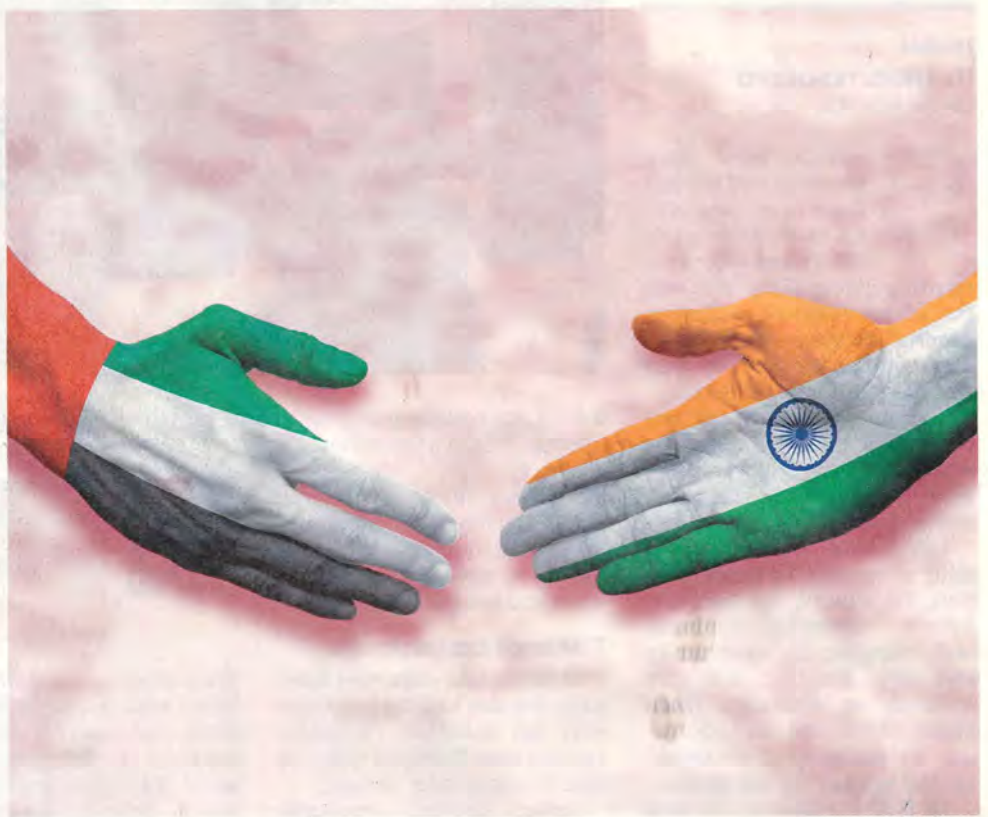
**T**he present times have been totally consumed by the Covid-19 pandemic. Whatever facet of life one can think of, the pandemic has had at least some impact on it. In most of the cases it has slowed down processes and resulted in delays. Diplomacy has, however, been an exception to this phenomenon. A testimony to this fact has been the India-UAE relationship. Approaching 50 years of diplomatic relations, our two countries, who already are comprehensive strategic partners, are determined to build further and stronger. Coordination and cooperation in the fields of energy, trade and commerce, and the people to people connection, have been the cornerstone of this ever evolving relationship. The field of medical cooperation had not realised its full potential, even though the pandemic has accelerated developments on this front.

## Friends stood by each other

In the early days of pandemic last year, when a sudden invisible enemy had invaded all our lives, friends stood by each other. When not much was known about treating the virus infected people, an already existing drug used for treating Malaria, Hydroxychloroquine (HCQ) showed some promise. While the research went on for a more precise drug, the demand for HCQ surged across world with increasing new cases everyday. India being the "Pharmacy of the World" had orders from almost all the countries. Amid such demand, India supplied 5.5 million tablets of HCQ to the UAE, on a priority basis, in the first shipment followed by more afterwards. Later in May 2020, UAE sent a plane containing 7 metric tons of medical supplies to India to bolster the India's efforts to curb the spread of Covid-19. It was estimated that the equipment sent by the UAE ensured that almost 7000 medical professionals in India were better prepared to combat the pandemic.

## Working in tandem

Large number of Indians are already employed in the UAE health sector, specially for their high skills. During the early days of pandemic in 2020, a team of health-care 88 nurses and other health-care specialists were sent to the UAE from India. Subsequently, more health care workers from India, numbering 400+, joined. Thereafter, technical cooperation on Covid-19 between the health-care experts of India and UAE got underway and researchers from both sides are now sharing their findings, and technical experts have also initiated discussions on genome sequencing of the virus. Several top health care providing companies in the UAE are run by Indians speaks of their contribution to this sector. In fact, to name just one of them, Dr. Zulekha Daud or "Mama Zulekha" as she is being commonly known, has delivered more than 10,000 children and founded two hospitals after moving to the UAE in 1964. Others like Dr. Azad Moopen and Dr. Shamsheer Vayalil have also contributed significantly to this sector and have earned accolades from the governments of both India as well as the UAE. Both



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the countries have always stood by each other in difficult times. During the second wave of Covid-19 in India, the UAE government sent cryogenic containers for transporting much needed Liquid Medical Oxygen (LMO) and hundreds of Oxygen concentrators, to India to bolster India's medical response to that devastating surge in cases in April/May 2021. Also, in an unprecedented move Emirates Airlines set up a humanitarian air-bridge between Dubai and India to transport urgent medical and relief items, to support India in its fight against the pandemic.

## Traditional wisdom

As UAE enters the Year of the Fiftieth, it has set a target of achieving more in the coming times and named the campaign appropriately "towards the next 50". India-UAE relations also stand to move upwards specially in the field of health care. India has vast experience in the field of generic medicines and many patients across the globe have benefited from this expertise. UAE market is yet to fully explore the benefits of 'Made in India' pharmaceuticals and medicines. The ancient Indian civilisation allowed the growth of multiple schools of medicines that involves traditional wisdom and knowledge, and materials that have been used for thousands of years. In order to give the modern world awareness of these traditional medicine systems, the Government of India, in 2014, created an independent ministry of AYUSH. The Ayurveda system is quite popular in

the UAE and has been recognised by the Ministry of Health and Prevention. Many hospitals in the UAE now have separate units extending ayurvedic treatments. Indian ayurvedic doctors have been recently honoured with Golden Visas recognising their contribution to the growth of ayurveda in the UAE. Annual AYUSH conferences are also routinely held in the UAE, showcasing the appetite for this form of medicine and the possibility of further cooperation in this field.

## Waterfalls project

In the above context, the mention of UAE's "Waterfalls" project is inevitable. UAE aims to train 1 million medics to shore up the world's defences against the spread of the pandemic, and a number of prominent Indian hospitals are already working on it. Given the professional experiences of the Indian health care experts in the UAE medical system, the hopes are high for the "Waterfalls" project to be yet another important facet of India-UAE friendship. As the world collectively fights the pandemic, India and the UAE are working together to strengthen their respective health care sectors. This provides an opportunity for health care professionals from both India and the UAE to ideate new developments, innovations and methods that can enhance health care delivery and further equip us to combat any future health crises.

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