

UAE-India CEPA Council Opens Applications for Start-Up Series 2.0, India's Largest Bilateral Start-Up Initiative

Delhi, India 14 July 2026 - The UAE-India CEPA Council today announced that applications for the second edition of the UAE-India Start-Up Series will open on 15 July 2026, marking the next phase of what has become India's largest bilateral start-up initiative. Following a record inaugural edition, which drew more than 10,000 applications from founders across India, Start-Up Series 2.0 will identify and support high-potential Indian start-ups seeking to scale into regional and global markets through Abu Dhabi.

The programme is delivered under the patronage of the UAE-India CEPA Council, the body established to translate the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) between the two countries into tangible commercial and innovation outcomes. Building on the momentum of its first edition, the 2.0 series will feature a more rigorous selection process, deeper engagement with the UAE's and India's investment and corporate community, and a clearer route for founders to establish a base in Abu Dhabi.

Applications will open on 15 July and run through a multi-stage selection process, culminating in a finals event to be held in November, where the strongest founders will be showcased before investors, corporates, regulators, and ecosystem partners.

Start-Up Series 2.0 is underpinned by the Council's cross-border partnership with Hub71, Abu Dhabi's global tech ecosystem, which provides selected founders with access to the emirate's capital, customers, regulators, and partner network. Under the partnership, three start-ups will be shortlisted into Hub71's Access Programme, with one onboarded to the programme with access to tailored mentorship, investor introductions, regulatory support, and Hub71's corporate and government partners, alongside AED 250,000 in in-kind incentives and AED 250,000 in cash via a SAFE note. Up to seven founders will also have the opportunity join the Hub71 Immersion Programme, which pairs a week of virtual preparation on the Abu Dhabi and UAE ecosystem with a week of in-person, curated sessions at Hub71 focused on market entry and introductions across its partner network.

The Council confirmed that a range of major UAE partners will be announced over the coming weeks, further strengthening the commercial infrastructure behind the series and the broader India-UAE start-up and innovation corridor. The series will focus on sectors aligned with the UAE's innovation priorities, including HealthTech, FinTech, ClimateTech, Advanced Manufacturing, and other emerging technologies.

Applications open on 15 July 2026. Further information is available at startupseries.ae.

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About the UAE-India CEPA Council

The UAE-India CEPA Council is the body established to advance commercial, investment, and innovation cooperation between the United Arab Emirates and India under the Comprehensive

Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA). Through initiatives such as the UAE-India Start-Up Series, the Council connects high-potential Indian founders with Abu Dhabi's capital, customers, regulators, and ecosystem, building a durable cross-border corridor for scale.