UAE confers 'First Class Order of Zayed II' on Indian pilot Captain Smit Machchhar – awarded by President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed

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News

UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan conferred the 'First Class Order of Zayed II' on flydubai's Indian captain Smit Machchhar and crew members (27 Oct 2026). Dubai Crown Prince Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed presented the honours. It recognises his courage on flight FZ1073 on 30 Sept 2026, when, though injured in an attack by the co-pilot in the cockpit, he protected the aircraft and passengers. He is believed to be the third Indian to receive it (the earlier two were Indian ambassadors). Note: this is the UAE's second-highest civilian honour; the highest is the 'Order of Zayed'.

Key facts

Honour	First Class Order of Zayed II – the UAE's second-highest civilian honour
Conferred by	President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed; presented by Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed (Dubai Crown Prince)
Date	27 Oct 2026
Reason	Courage during the cockpit attack on flydubai FZ1073 (30 Sept 2026)

Earlier Indians	Ambassadors Navdeep Singh Suri (2019), Sunjay Sudhir (2025)
Earlier honour	Israel's Presidential Award for Civilian Heroism, announced by President Isaac Herzog (8 Oct 2026)

Background

- Award: the 'Order of Zayed' is the UAE's highest civilian honour, usually for heads of state; PM Narendra Modi received it in 2019 (announced 4 Apr, presented 24 Aug). The 'Order of Zayed II' usually goes to ambassadors and officials. Both are named after the UAE's founding President, Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan.
- Geography: the UAE is a federation of seven emirates (1971); capital Abu Dhabi. It lies on the Persian Gulf, near the Strait of Hormuz.
- India–UAE ties: the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) has been in force since 1 May 2022. PM Modi opened the BAPS Hindu Mandir, Abu Dhabi's first traditional stone temple, on 14 Feb 2024. The UAE has been a BRICS member since 1 Jan 2024.
- Aviation safety: the two-person cockpit rule spread after the 2015 Germanwings crash. The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) is in Montreal.

Tamil Nadu link: the Tamil Nadu Government gives the 'Anna Medal for Gallantry' for acts of bravery in life-threatening situations – the Chief Minister presents it every year at the Republic Day function (e.g. in 2025 to Leading Fireman K. Vetrivel, who saved three people from drowning in the Adyar).

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