

INDIA SPEAKS

(Monthly Digest of Official Indian Statements on Middle East)

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BILATERAL ISSUES

a. JORDAN

1. Visit of Cultural Troupe to Amman, Jordan, 8 February 2016

A 10-member Rajasthani Music and Dance Group led by Issak Khan sponsored by Indian Council of Cultural Relations visited Jordan from 2-7 February 2016. On 4 February, the cultural troupe performed at King Hussein Cultural Centre in which Ambassadors, academicians, think-tanks and other important dignitaries were invited. The troupe gave a second performance on 5 February at Al Dulayl near Irbid in front of a large Indian and Jordanian audience. The performance by the Group was highly appreciated.

Source: Embassy of India, Amman, http://indembassy-amman.org/Indian_Council_1.html

b. KUWAIT

2. Indian Embassy to organize Indian cultural evening of Qawwali, Kuwait, 28 February 2016

Embassy of India in coordination with National Council for Culture, Arts & Letters (NCCAL) has organized an Indian cultural evening by Qawwali Group led by Imran Khan on 9-10 March 2016.

The event will be held on 9 March at 7.00 PM at Dasma Theatre (Opposite Dasma Cooperative) and on 10 March 2016 at 7.00 PM at Indian Embassy Auditorium.

Qawwali lovers are requested to attend the event according to their convenience.

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Source: Embassy of India, Kuwait, <http://www.indembkwt.org/DispNews.aspx?ID=918>

3. Body of Indian woman at mortuary – Embassy seeks help from Community in locating relatives, Kuwait, 19 February 2016

It has come to our notice that the body of Late Kumadam Lalita Kumari (Passport No. F-1051441), an Indian National of Andhra Pradesh, is lying at a local mortuary since early January 2016. For transportation of the body to her relatives in India, the Embassy has written to the District authorities (thrice) in the district of Kaddappa (A.P.) asking them to inform the relatives of the deceased for their confirmation with regard to receiving the body on arrival at Hyderabad airport. No response has been received so far from the relatives.

2. The Embassy seeks urgent help from the members of Indian Community in locating near and dear ones of Late Kumadam Lalita Kumari so that her mortal remains are sent to India at the earliest. A.K. Srivastava, Second Secretary (Community Welfare) may please be contacted in this matter on Mobile-97229914

3. For background, during the year 2014, a total of 559 Indians died in Kuwait, while mortal remains of 434 nationals were sent to India. The facility of local burial was permitted after taking consent from the respective family members in 125 cases. Free transportation of mortal remains was provided in 29 destitute cases and the Embassy incurred KD-4,013 on airfreight and coffin box etc. from ICWF. Similarly during the year 2015, there were 611 deaths of our nationals, while mortal remains of 504 persons were sent to India. Local burial was permitted in 107 cases by their family members. Free transportation of mortal remains was provided in 35 destitute cases by the Embassy incurring KD-4,456 on the expenses of airfreight and coffin box.

Source: Embassy of India, Kuwait, <http://www.indembkwt.org/DispNews.aspx?ID=917>

4. Indian Exporters to showcase their mettle at ‘The Kuwait International Trade Fair’, Kuwait, 17 February 2016

The Federation of Indian Export Organizations (FIEO), New Delhi with the support of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India, New Delhi and in association with the Embassy of India, Kuwait is organizing an “INDIA PAVILION” at ‘The Kuwait International Trade Fair’, an International Trade Exhibition organized by the Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Kuwait, at the Kuwait International Fair Ground (Hall 6), Mishref, Kuwait from 21-27 February 2016. H.E. Sunil Jain, Ambassador of India to Kuwait will inaugurate the India Pavilion on 21 February 2016.

2. The “India Pavilion” at ‘The Kuwait International Trade Fair’ would provide an excellent platform for networking and one-to-one business meetings with potential customers. Eleven leading companies from India are participating in the “India Pavilion”. These companies are showcasing a wide range of products including Marble Handicrafts, Brass Handicrafts, Wood Handicrafts, Paintings, Handicrafts Products, Imitation Jewellery, Plastic Moulded Furniture (Chairs; Tables, Cabinet, Chests, Kids Furniture), Zari Work Table Covers, Purses, Cosmetics, Decorative, Fancy Items, Batik, Block Print & Stitching on Sari, Salwar Kurti, Clothing, Shawls, Scarves, Stoles, Ladies Woven Embroidery Tops, Dresses, Skirts, Stoles, Garments, Home Furnishings, etc.

3. The event is open to the public from 9:30 am to 1:00 pm and from 4:30 pm to 9:30 pm on all days of the Fair except on Friday, 26 February 2016, the timings will be from 4:30 pm to 10:00 pm.

Source: Embassy of India, Kuwait, <http://www.indembkwt.org/DispNews.aspx?ID=915>

5. Indian Embassy organize "Kalam Ko Salam" a tribute to Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam, Kuwait, 2 February 2016

The Embassy of India in association with Ayubi Arts & Motion Pictures and Writers Forum of Kuwait is organizing an event captioned “Kalam Ko Salam” as a tribute to the Former President of India Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam.

The function will be held in the Embassy Auditorium on 6 February 2016 (Saturday) from 6 PM to 9 PM. The event will start with a documentary film about the Former President which will be followed by Kavi Sammellan and Mushaira.

All are invited to attend the event.

Source: Embassy of India, Kuwait, <http://www.indembkwt.org/DispNews.aspx?ID=907>

6. President of India’s message on the eve of National Day of Kuwait, New Delhi, 24 February 2016

The President of India, Pranab Mukherjee has extended his greetings and felicitations to the Amir and people of the State of Kuwait on the eve of their National Day (25 February 2016).

In a message to His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah Amir of the State of Kuwait, the President has said, “On behalf of the Government, the people of India and on my own behalf, it is with great pleasure that I extend warm greetings and felicitations to Your Highness and to the people of the State of Kuwait on the occasion of your National Day.

The historical and friendly relations between India and Kuwait are based on the millennia-old cultural, religious and economic exchanges between our two countries, characterized by extensive people-to-people contacts and deep mutual respect. I am confident that our ongoing cooperation across the full spectrum of political, economic and cultural activities will continue to diversify and strengthen – to our mutual benefit.

I take this opportunity to convey to Your Highness my best wishes for your personal good health and well-being – and for the continued progress and prosperity of the friendly people of the State of Kuwait”.

Source: Press Information Bureau of India, New Delhi, <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx>

c. OMAN

7. The Embassy of India, Muscat, in association with Oman Chamber of Commerce & Industry (OCCI), will be organizing a trade and investment promotion event on 30 March 2016, Muscat, 29 February 2016

The Embassy of India, Muscat, in association with Oman Chamber of Commerce & Industry (OCCI), will be organizing a trade and investment promotion event on 30 March 2016 with focus on Healthcare, Food Industry, Information Technology, Mining & Mineral and Construction & Infrastructure sectors. Apex Chambers in India like Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), Federation of Indian Export Organization (FIEO), National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM) and Trade Promotion Council of India (TPCI) will be organizing delegations of reputed Indian companies to showcase their products and services in the above sectors to the Omani business enterprises. The purpose is to provide Indian companies from these sectors a platform to explore opportunities for exports, business tie-ups, investments and project work in Oman.

India and Oman, maritime neighbours, enjoy excellent political relations. Under their strategic partnership, cooperation and exchanges between the two countries have been expanding. Bilateral trade, which had grown to US\$ 5.77 billion in 2013-14, has since been declining in value. It had amounted to US\$ 4.18 billion in 2014-15. Mutual investment between Oman and India is estimated at US\$ 7.5 billion. As per the information made available by Ministry of Commerce and Industry of Oman, there are over 2900 Indian enterprises in Oman with an estimated investment of US\$ 4.5 billion. Omani investments in India are estimated at US\$ 3 billion. The State General Reserve Fund (SGRF) of Oman, the main sovereign wealth fund of Oman, has been making investments in India. It is also the Omani partner of ‘Oman India Joint Investment Fund’ (OIJIF) with SBI as the Indian partner. The first tranche of US\$ 100 million raised by the Fund has already been invested in seven projects in India. SGRF and SBI are in the process of finalizing the second tranche of US\$ 300 million, with equal contribution by the two partners.

With a view to provide opportunities for match making and business-interactions, the Embassy, in association with Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), will organize a B2B Meeting at Hotel Crowne Plaza, Muscat on 30 March with relevant Omani enterprises, to be invited by OCCI. Later, in the afternoon a seminar on business/project work opportunities available in Oman in the above sector will be organized at the Embassy premises. Key Omani Government/Private Authorities will be invited for making presentations to the Indian delegation on project work and investment opportunities available in Oman in above sectors.

Omani enterprises dealing in the above mentioned sectors in Oman are invited to attend the session at Hotel Crowne Plaza, Muscat and interact with Indian companies on 30 March 2016. For further information and details please contact at commasst@indemb-oman.org

Source: Embassy of India, Muscat, <http://www.indemb-oman.org/inner.aspx?type=AllPressRelease&id=0>

8. Embassy of India, Muscat is organizing the annual ‘ITEC Day’, Muscat, 24 February 2016

Embassy of India, Muscat is organizing the annual 'ITEC Day' on Monday, 29 February 2016 at the Embassy Auditorium. The Reception is expected to be attended by a large number of ITEC Alumni and representatives of the Government of Oman, officials and media.

The ITEC Day provides an opportunity to the ITEC Alumni, who have been trained in India under this Programme, to get-together at the Embassy to interact among themselves and learn from their experiences, which they will share during the function.

ITEC Programme, fully-funded by the Government of India, has evolved and expanded over the years. Under ITEC, 161 countries in Asia, Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean, East Europe, as well as Pacific and Small Islands are invited to share in India's developmental experience in various fields. Every year India provides over 8,000 scholarships to be utilized for participation in around 300 short, medium and long-term courses in 47 institutions which are state-of-art centres of learning & excellence. The ITEC Programme covers a very diverse range of subjects from traditional areas like agriculture, SMEs, management, English language to IT, Science & Technology, biotechnology, etc. Over the years, the ITEC Programme has emerged as a key pillar of India's cooperation with the developing countries.

The skills which are being provided under ITEC Programme facilitate human resource development, capacity building, skills up gradation and empowerment. Training and skill development under India's ITEC Programme contributes directly and significantly to Oman's goals to develop its human resources and its priority for diversification of its economy through small & medium enterprises (SMEs). The ITEC programme is also open to private sector in Oman, which is also in conformity with the Sultanate's policy of job creation through private sector. In the last few decades, India has become a centre for global research and development (R&D). India is emerging as a prominent hub for innovation and is expanding its investment in this field and is ready to share its experience with all friendly countries, including Oman.

Under the ITEC Programme, India had been extending 50 fully-funded training scholarships to Oman annually up to FY 2011-12. Given the popularity in Oman of ITEC Programme, the number of ITEC scholarships was increased for Oman to 85 in 2012-13, to 125 in 2013-14 and to 150 in 2014-15 and 2015-16. Keeping in mind our exceptionally close bilateral relations and Oman's interest, the ITEC scholarships for Oman will be utilized for skill development and capacity building of Omani officials and youth.

Source: Embassy of India, Muscat, <http://www.indemb-oman.org/inner.aspx?type=AllPressRelease&id=0>

9. Ambassador H. E. Indra Mani Pandey hosted a reception for the Indian community in Oman, Muscat, 23 February 2016

Ambassador H. E. Indra Mani Pandey hosted a reception for the Indian community in Oman on 22 February 2016 at Embassy Auditorium. This was his first reception for the community since he joined Muscat as Ambassador of India to the Sultanate of Oman on 10 August 2015.

In his welcome address to the Indian community, Ambassador conveyed his appreciation for the role played by the community in developing close relations and strategic partnership between India and Oman and the contribution that the community has been making in growth and development of Oman as well as India. Ambassador outlined the initiatives taken by the Embassy to reach out to various segments of the Indian community in Oman, including Indian workers. In this context, Ambassador appreciated the role played by Indian Social Clubs in Muscat and in other cities, various linguistic wings, volunteers, social workers and other community organizations in meeting social, cultural, educational and other needs of the community and in assisting the Embassy in reaching out to various segments of Indian community in Oman. Ambassador referred to the successful launch of MigCall Mobile App which has enabled thousands of Indian workers in the Gulf countries to connect to the Indian Embassies and Consulates in case they need any assistance.

Ambassador reiterated the commitment of the Government of India to promote the welfare of Indian communities abroad and spoke about various initiatives taken by the Government of India for forging close ties with Indian diaspora. He invited the Indian community in Oman to participate wholeheartedly in various developmental schemes launched by the Indian Government, like 'Make in India', 'Skill India', 'Digital India', 'Smart Cities', 'Clean India', etc. Ambassador reiterated his request to the community to do their utmost in enhancing bilateral trade and mutual investments between India and Oman and improving living and working conditions of Indian workers in Oman.

Indian community expressed its appreciation for the reception hosted by the Ambassador which provided the community an opportunity to understand better the initiatives taken by the Embassy and the Government of India for promoting the welfare of Indian diaspora in Oman. The Reception provided also an excellent opportunity to the community to interact with one another.

Source: Embassy of India, Muscat, <http://www.indemb-oman.org/inner.aspx?type=AllPressRelease&id=0>

10. Defence Secretary of India, H.E. G. Mohan Kumar, accompanied by a three-member delegation visited Oman, Muscat, 10 February 2016

Defence Secretary of India G. Mohan Kumar accompanied by a three-member delegation, visited Muscat on 8-9 February 2016. He led the Indian delegation to the 8th Meeting of Joint Military Cooperation Committee; the Omani delegation to the Meeting was led by H.E. Mohamed bin Nasser AL-Rasby, Secretary-General, Ministry of Defence. The meeting reviewed the existing defence cooperation between the two countries and identified further steps to strengthen it. The two countries underlined their determination to further expand their defence cooperation, which has been an important pillar of India-Oman strategic partnership. G. Mohan Kumar also met with Chief of Staff of Sultan Armed Forces Lt. Gen. Ahmed bin Harith Al Nabhani, and Secretary General, National Security Council Major Gen Ahmed Salman Khushoob.

Source: Embassy of India, Muscat, <http://www.indemb-oman.org/inner.aspx?type=AllPressRelease&id=0>

11. Indian Coast Guard Ship Sankalp visits Oman, Muscat, 4 February 2016

Indian Coast Guard Ship Sankalp, is scheduled to visit Oman from 9-13 February 16. ICGS Sankalp will be on a goodwill visit to Muscat to further reinforce the existing cooperation in defence and security between India and Oman. The visit also aims at improving cooperation with Royal Oman Coast Guard. The ship is on a four Nation overseas deployment tour in the GCC with Muscat being the last and most important port that she would enter prior to her return to India.

ICGS Sankalp, the 5th Advanced Offshore Patrol Vessel (AOPV) of Indian Coast Guard, was indigenously designed and built by Goa Shipyard Limited and commissioned on 20 May 2008. 'Sankalp', meaning Determination, is symbolic of Indian Coast Guard's will and motivation to strive for excellence.

ICGS Sankalp has 16 officers and 97 other personnel on board under the Command of Deputy Inspector General Mukul Garg. The ship is based at Mumbai, under the administrative and operational command of Coast Guard Regional Commander (West), Mumbai.

The 105 m long Sankalp is equipped with state of the art navigational and communication sensors and other equipment and is capable of embarking Advanced Light Helicopters (ALH) and Chetak helicopters. At economical speed, she has an endurance of 6500 nautical miles and can stay at sea for 25 days without any replenishment, thus sailing up to her motto – 'Extending the Horizon'.

ICGS Sankalp has been extensively deployed on the Western seaboard from Gujarat to Kerala coast, International Maritime Boundary Line patrol and surveillance off Lakshadweep and Minicoy group of Islands. The ship has also visited many foreign ports on goodwill visits during overseas deployments, which include a maiden voyage by any Coast Guard vessel to Australia.

The visit of ICGS Sankalp to Oman is the third visit by an Indian Coast Guard Ship to Oman in last three years; ICGS Samudra Prahari and ICGS Vijit had made friendly voyages to Muscat port in March 2013 and January 2015, respectively.

Source: Embassy of India, Muscat, <http://www.indemb-oman.org/inner.aspx?type=AllPressRelease&id=0>

12. Ban on Satellite Phones, Doha, 25 February 2016

Foreign nationals proceeding to India for Tourism/ other purposes are advised not to carry Satellite Phones with them, as it is liable to be seized/ confiscated by authorities concerned in India.

Source: Embassy of India, Doha, <http://www.indianembassyqatar.gov.in/pages/importantannouncements.php>

13. Qatar Financial Centre - Setting up of new Business in Qatar, Doha, 25 February 2016

The Embassy has often received queries about setting up new business in the State of Qatar. Apart from the normal procedure to register a company to conduct businesses in the country, the Qatar Financial Centre (QFC) offers an attractive option in the specified sectors.

The Qatar Financial Centre (QFC), established in March 2005, is a fully onshore business and financial centre located in Doha and provides an excellent platform for firms to incorporate and to business in Qatar and the region. The QFC offers its own legal, regulatory, tax and business infrastructure, which allows 100percent foreign ownership, unlimited repatriation of profits, no restrictions on the currency used for trading, and charges a competitive rate of 10percent corporate tax on locally sourced profits.

The broad range of permitted sectors includes Holding companies, Trust & Trust Services, Banking, Asset Management, Insurance, Investment Services, Professional services like Consulting, Media, PR, Risk Management etc.

The QFC offers several tax benefits including no withholding tax on payment out of Qatar, benefits of double taxation agreements with over 60 countries and no personal income tax, wealth tax or VAT.

In addition to above, the QPF provides a range of services to licensed firms in order to facilitate market entry and enhance their success. New firms can set up anywhere in Qatar and are assisted with immigration, visas and office facilities. Furthermore, the business community is supported by a dedicated Client Relations Team and through regular events and outreach programmes, publications and QFC Client, a dedicated extranet platform.

For more information, please visit the website <http://www.qfc.qa/en> or write to Jahon Burhonov, Head of Asia, Business Development, Qatar Financial Centre, Tel: +974 4496 7803, Fax: +974 4496 7669, Email: j.burhonov@qfc.qa.

Source: Embassy of India, Doha,
<http://www.indianembassyqatar.gov.in/pages/importantannouncements.php>

d. SAUDI ARABIA

14. Ambassador of India to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Ahmad Javed arrived, Riyadh, 17 February 2016

Ambassador of India to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Ahmad Javed arrived today in Riyadh. At the Riyadh airport, he was received by the senior officials from the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Embassy of India, Riyadh. Prior to his new assignment as Ambassador of India to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Ahmad Javed served as the Commissioner of Mumbai Police.

Source: Embassy of India, Riyadh,
<http://www.indianembassy.org.sa/Content.aspx?ID=790&PID=691>

e. UAE

15. State Visit of Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces to India (10-12 February 2016), New Delhi, 07 February 2016

At the invitation of Hon'ble Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, H.H. General Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces is paying his first State visit to India from 10-12 February 2016. He will be accompanied by a high-level delegation, including Ministers, senior officials and captains of industry.

During the forthcoming visit, H.H. the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi will call on Hon'ble President and hold bilateral talks with Hon'ble Prime Minister Narendra Modi on issues of mutual interest. The visit follows the visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to UAE in August 2015, during which the two countries agreed to elevate the relationship to a comprehensive strategic partnership.

India and UAE have historically enjoyed close and friendly relations anchored on mutually beneficial commercial exchanges and extensive people to people contacts. Our well-balanced bilateral trade amounted to US\$ 59 billion in 2014-15, making UAE our third largest trading partner. UAE is among the largest investors in India in terms of foreign direct investments. It contributes significantly to India's energy security and is the sixth largest supplier of crude oil to India in 2014-15.

About 2.6 million strong and vibrant Indian community forms the largest expatriate group in UAE. Their positive and well-appreciated contribution in the development of their host country has been an important anchor of our excellent bilateral engagement.

India has vital stakes in the security and stability of the Gulf region, which hosts over seven million Indians. This region is also the source of nearly two-third of India's crude oil requirements and is our largest trading partner.

Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, http://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/26331/State_Visit_of_Crown_Prince_of_Abu_Dhabi_and_Deputy_Supreme_Commander_of_the_UAE_Armed_Forces_to_India_1012_February_2016

16. India- UAE Joint Statement during the State Visit of Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, New Delhi, 12 February 2016

At the invitation of Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of the Republic of India, His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces paid his first State Visit to India from 10 to 12 February 2016. The visit follows Prime Minister Modi's official visit to the UAE in August 2015, during which the UAE and India agreed to elevate their friendly relationship to a comprehensive strategic partnership.

India and the UAE enjoy strong bonds of friendship based on civilizational links, age-old maritime trade and vibrant people-to-people contacts. In modern times, the dynamism of the two countries has translated into a rapidly expanding and mutually beneficial partnership, with the two nations now enjoying an extensive framework of agreements and partnerships. Close geographical proximity, historical links, cultural affinity, natural synergies, shared aspirations and common challenges provide further impetus to this robust engagement.

During Prime Minister Modi's historic visit to UAE in August 2015, the UAE and India agreed to further strengthen their cooperation in several key areas, including trade and investment, security, counter-terrorism, joint defence production, space cooperation, IT and electronics. During their meeting in New Delhi on 11 February, His Highness the Crown Prince and Prime Minister Modi expressed satisfaction at the progress made in advancing bilateral cooperation in these areas since last August, and underscored the two countries' collective ambition to continue to develop the vast potential of the UAE-India relationship.

Prime Minister Modi and His Highness the Crown Prince held wide-ranging discussions in a sincere, cordial and friendly atmosphere. They exchanged views on bilateral, regional and multilateral issues of mutual interest and reached a broad consensus. The discussions enabled better appreciation of each other's concerns and perspectives and helped forge closer understanding at the highest political level.

Assessing that their ties have never been stronger and expressing satisfaction at the direction of bilateral engagement, the two leaders announced their decision to renew the new strategic direction of the UAE-India relationship in a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership Agreement setting out the principles on which the UAE-India partnership is based, and outlining a roadmap for deepening cooperation.

Recognizing the need to further develop and strengthen the historical links that bind the UAE and India, the two leaders agreed to build a partnership for the 21st century anchored in values of respect, mutual understanding, and dynamic cooperation. They looked forward to the early signing of the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership Agreement, and resolved to build on the momentum by pursuing the following areas of collaboration:

Trade, Investment and Economic Development

The two leaders appreciated the strong synergies between the UAE and India, which have been shaped by centuries of successful cooperation and interconnectedness. For a long time, Mumbai has served as the UAE's gateway to India, and as a springboard to a world of learning and opportunity. Today, the UAE is a dynamic hub for global business, and the access point to India and the world for many nations.

Emphasizing the importance of expanding growth and trade opportunities to drive the strategic partnership forward, the two leaders noted the constructive outcomes of the meeting of the UAE-

India Joint Commission held in September 2015, and the meetings of the UAE-India High Level Taskforce on Investment held in October 2015 and February 2016. They welcomed the launch of the UAE-India Business Council in September 2015 and agreed to build the Council into a solid and useful platform for cooperation.

The two sides expressed satisfaction at the level of bilateral trade, which amounted to US\$ 59 billion in 2014-15. Taking note of their excellent economic engagement, with the two countries being among the top trading partners for each other, the two leaders agreed upon the need to further strengthen these ties, particularly through diversifying non-oil trade. They also expressed satisfaction at the growing presence of Indian and UAE companies in each other's market and agreed to further encourage trade promotion measures and participation in fairs and exhibitions.

Reaffirming their resolve to work together to substantially increase trade by 60 percent over the next five years as agreed during Prime Minister Modi's visit to the UAE in August 2015, the two sides examined various tariff and non-tariff barriers, and agreed to enhance the trade of priority commodities and expand the access of goods and services in both markets. They expressed satisfaction in respect to trade promotion measures adopted under their bilateral Action Plans.

His Highness the Crown Prince expressed confidence in India's dynamic economy and appreciation for Prime Minister Modi's impressive vision for the future of the country. He commended Prime Minister Modi's dynamic initiatives "Start Up India", "Make in India", "Smart City", and "Clean India", noting their strong potential to provide India's US\$ 2 trillion economy a positive impetus for growth, and to accelerate progress in bilateral cooperation between the two countries.

The Indian side highlighted the major initiatives taken by the Government of India to improve the ease of doing business in the country. India's key efforts to simplify and rationalize existing rules and relax foreign direct investment caps in key areas, including railways, defence, and insurance were also noted. Prime Minister Modi invited the UAE to be a partner in India's growth story, and to participate in projects creating mega industrial manufacturing corridors, including the Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor as well as the Digital India and Start up India programs.

The two sides discussed their plans for infrastructure development. The Indian side highlighted the experience and expertise its companies had acquired in infrastructure development, including in power generation and transmission, civil construction, railways and metros, hospitals, airports, housing and roads. It conveyed the interest of Indian companies to be a partner in the infrastructure projects being undertaken by the UAE in preparation for the World EXPO, which will be held in Dubai in 2020, as well as in the UAE's development plans.

The UAE noted its interest in investing in infrastructure development in India, especially in priority areas such as railways, roads, ports, and shipping. The two leaders welcomed the

opening of the new smart port Nhava Sheva in Mumbai on 12 February and the signing of a framework Memorandum of Understanding between the UAE and India which will serve to facilitate and expand the participation of Emirati investors in infrastructure projects in India. The two sides described these developments as important steps towards reaching the US\$ 75 billion target for UAE investments in India's infrastructure development plans.

The Indian side thanked the UAE side for its interest shown in the proposal for establishing a semiconductor fabrication facility in India. The two sides agreed to further business-to-business cooperation in Information Technology (IT), Information Technology Enabled Services (ITES), and Electronics System Design and Manufacturing (ESDM). The UAE side also expressed its willingness to assist in India's goal of attracting capital and investment by pursuing opportunities in the health care industry, including in pharmaceuticals and biotechnology sectors and resolved to urge its private sector to explore early participation in these sectors.

The two sides agreed to enhance cooperation in space science and space technology and to explore a long-term plan to identify cooperation projects in areas of mutual interest. They expressed satisfaction at the active engagement between the UAE Space Agency and the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO), which has led to the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding and the establishment of a Joint Working Group for space cooperation.

The two sides further agreed to exchange information on various investment opportunities and related incentives and to exchange information on financial, legal, and administrative incentives along with required procedures to cooperate in establishing joint investment projects in the UAE and India, as well as joint investment projects in third countries. They also agreed to pool resources and expertise in the development of infrastructure in third countries.

In the area of civil aviation, the leaders recognized that the further expansion and development of air routes between the UAE and India is essential for the continued growth of broader economic relations. They also agreed to convene consultations between their respective civil aviation authorities in the first quarter of 2016, to discuss key areas of mutual interest.

Energy and Climate Change

Recognizing that energy is a central pillar of the economic relationship, the two leaders expressed satisfaction at their growing bilateral trade in the energy sector, noting that the UAE is one of the largest suppliers of crude oil to India. They welcomed the intention of the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC) and the Indian Strategic Petroleum Reserves Ltd. (ISPRL) to sign a Memorandum of Understanding on the Establishment of a Strategic Petroleum Reserve in India, and agreed to conclude negotiations in the near future.

The two sides looked forward to increased cooperation in the crude oil sector, including through training, and human resources development. The Indian side conveyed the keen interest of Indian oil companies in forming joint ventures with and offering equity participation to UAE

companies, as well as in seeking participation in prospective exploration rounds in the UAE and in opportunities for joint exploration in third countries.

The two leaders acknowledged the need to cooperate on climate change in line with the Paris Agreement, and noted that the development of sustainable sources of energy is a shared strategic priority. They agreed to expand their collaboration in renewable energy and in international negotiations on climate change, under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and agreed to continue to extend strong support to the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA).

The two leaders also agreed to explore opportunities to foster partnerships between the government, the private sector, civil society and academia in the field of climate change. They welcomed the signing of a General Framework Arrangement for Cooperation in Renewable Energy, which will lead to deeper exchanges in these areas.

His Highness the Crown Prince commended Prime Minister Modi on the launch of the new International Solar Alliance (ISA) initiative in Paris on 30 November 2015, and affirmed support for the initiative, in which the UAE is a founding member. The two leaders agreed to build on the outcomes of the second Steering Committee meeting of ISA, which was held in Abu Dhabi in January 2016, to advance new solar technologies worldwide. They acknowledged the importance of ensuring synergies between the ISA and IRENA.

People and Culture

The UAE and India are pluralistic societies which value diversity and strive to show respect for all faiths and religions. The two leaders recognized the close links between the people of both countries, including the valuable role of the Indian community in the UAE, and its contribution to the prosperity and development of both India and the UAE.

Reflecting on the important legacy of Mahatma Gandhi both at home and internationally, His Highness the Crown Prince expressed admiration for the values of tolerance and non-violence espoused by the late leader, noting that these values strongly resonate with the people of the UAE.

His Highness the Crown Prince expressed appreciation for the role and contribution that the Indian community in the UAE has made to the UAE's development, noting that Indian citizens in the UAE were highly respected for their peaceful and hard-working ethics. The Indian side thanked the UAE for ensuring the continued welfare of the Indian community in the UAE and for the process of labour reforms initiated by the UAE Ministry of Labour. The two sides agreed to hold the next India-UAE Joint Labour Committee Meeting in the first quarter of 2016 and to work towards the early conclusion of a bilateral Memorandum of Understanding on labour issues.

The two sides welcomed the signing of a Cultural Exchange Programme between India and UAE for 2016-2018, which aims to enhance cultural cooperation between the two countries. They agreed to promote cooperation in the media, radio, film, and television. The leaders also directed that a cultural project, bringing art to infrastructure, be initiated in 2016 to showcase the vitality and diversity of UAE culture in India.

Security and Defence

The two leaders expressed satisfaction at the current levels of bilateral security cooperation between the UAE and India, and acknowledged the progress achieved through regular security dialogue between their National Security Councils. They agreed to strengthen their strategic partnership by continuing to work closely together on a range of security issues, particularly on counter-terrorism, maritime security, and cyber-security, while re-affirming their respect for the bedrock principles of national sovereignty and non-interference.

With a view to ensuring that the cyberspace remains a safe and secure space which would not be used as a medium to promote subversive and extremist ideologies, the two sides agreed to cooperate on sharing technical best practices in the field of information and communications technologies.

In the area of defence cooperation, the two sides renewed their commitment to strengthening the existing cooperation in training, joint exercises, and participation in defence exhibitions, as well as in identifying opportunities to cooperate on the production of defence equipment in India.

The two leaders agreed to enhance cooperation to strengthen maritime security in the Gulf and the Indian Ocean region, which is vital for the security and prosperity of both countries.

Expressing satisfaction at the progress achieved in the fifth round of navy-to-navy staff talks held in Abu Dhabi in September 2015, the two sides agreed to hold the next meeting of the Joint Defence Cooperation Committee in the near future and to expedite the conclusion of the Memorandum of Understanding on the Mutual Protection of Classified Information.

International and Regional Cooperation

The two leaders strongly condemned extremism and terrorism in all of their forms and manifestations, irrespective of who the perpetrators are and of their motivations. They reiterated that any justification for terrorism and any link between extremism or terrorism and religion should be strongly rejected by the international community. They reiterated their condemnation for efforts, including by states, to use religion to justify, support and sponsor terrorism against other countries, or to use terrorism as instrument of state policy. They further deplored efforts by countries to give religious and sectarian colour to political issues and pointed out the responsibility of all states to control the activities of the so-called 'non-state actors', and to cut

all support to terrorists operating and perpetrating terrorism from their territories against other states.

The two sides deplored the use of double standards in addressing the menace of international terrorism and agreed to strengthen cooperation in combating terrorism both at the bilateral level and within the multilateral system. Praising their growing bilateral cooperation to combat international terrorism, the two leaders expressed confidence that these efforts would contribute to global peace and security. The two leaders further called upon the international community to strengthen international and multilateral regimes to effectively address the challenges posed by terrorism, and to not allow political considerations stand in the way of their implementation. The two sides agreed to work together towards the adoption of India's proposed Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism in the United Nations.

The Indian side expressed deep appreciation for the solidarity expressed by the UAE on the terrorist attack on the Indian Air force base in Pathankot in early January.

In the context of the growing phenomenon of religious intolerance and radicalization being witnessed worldwide, the two leaders commended each other on their efforts to build pluralistic societies based on universal values of humanity and peaceful co-existence among different faiths and communities. The two sides noted that the Indian and UAE models act as strong bulwarks against the forces of extremism and radicalism. They affirmed their abiding commitment to the ideals of promoting harmony between different cultures and faiths through interfaith dialogue.

The two leaders also agreed to establish an annual Policy Dialogue to discuss issues related to peace in security in their region, and to strengthen their dialogue on regional security issues of mutual interest. They noted the signing in January of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Emirates Policy Centre and the Indian Institute for Defence and Strategic Analyses. In order to further strengthen institutional cooperation and understanding between the two countries, the two sides pledged to deepen cooperation between India's Ministry of External Affairs and the UAE Ministry of Foreign Affairs, including through policy planning dialogue, and coordination on the training of their diplomats through exchange programs and collaboration between their respective diplomatic training institutes.

Acknowledging the importance of achieving sustainable solutions through international cooperation mechanisms, the two leaders noted with satisfaction that the UAE and India share many common positions on issues of importance in the multilateral context, and agreed to fortify their efforts in international fora in the future, including by strengthening their cooperation in the framework of the Indian Ocean Rim Association.

They also expressed interest in exploring opportunities for South-South cooperation in sub-Saharan Africa, particularly through trade and investment, grants and loans, collaboration in

trade and technology, and joint projects aimed at supporting the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals.

Prime Minister Modi thanked His Highness the Crown Prince for the UAE's support for India's candidature for permanent membership of a reformed UN Security Council.

Conclusion

His Highness the Crown Prince thanked Prime Minister Modi and the people of India for the warm welcome extended to him and his delegation. He extended invitations to the Honourable President and Prime Minister of India to visit the UAE at a mutually convenient time, which were gladly accepted. The two leaders re-affirmed their commitment to building a comprehensive strategic partnership for the 21st century, noting that regular high-level exchanges play a key role in enhancing the partnership between India and the UAE.

Source: Embassy of India, Abu Dhabi, <http://indembassyuae.org/india-uae-joint-statement-during-the-state-visit-of-crown-prince-of-abu-dhabi/>

17. Dharmendra Pradhan holds bilateral meeting with H.E. Suhail Mohammed Al Mazrouei of United Arab Emirates, New Delhi, 24 February 2016

The Minister of State (I/C) for Petroleum and Natural Gas Dharmendra Pradhan held bilateral meeting with H. E. Suhail Mohammed Al Mazrouei, Minister for Energy of UAE in New Delhi. Mazrouei is in India, a day ahead of the State visit of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi.

Pradhan called the India-UAE bilateral relations as a time tested engagement. He expressed happiness that India and the UAE enjoyed warm, close and multifaceted relations for centuries and there was a mutual aspiration to develop a closer partnership between our two countries and there are several bilateral institutional mechanisms, covering various facets of bilateral relations that are helping both countries fulfil this aspiration. He recalled the successful and landmark visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to UAE in August last year as an example of our growing engagement.

During the meeting, both Ministers discussed areas of mutual interest to further strengthen bilateral cooperation in the hydrocarbon sector. Pradhan highlighted that cooperation in the field of hydrocarbon was an important element of our bilateral relationship and noted that nearly eight percent of India's petroleum products were sourced from UAE. Hence, it played an important role in our energy security.

Pradhan conveyed that as Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas, it is his earnest endeavour to boost trade and investment in the hydrocarbon sector between the two countries. He emphasized that there exists a lot of untapped potential and expressed confidence that our bilateral hydrocarbon linkages will grow in the coming years.

While there were no upstream engagements by any Indian E&P Company in UAE, Pradhan informed that from UAE that Indian Public Sector Enterprises, such as ONGC Videsh, Indian Oil, Bharat Petroleum, Hindustan Petroleum and Oil India were interested in seeking participation in the producing assets or prospective exploration rounds in the UAE. He also conveyed that Indian companies are interested in acquiring a stake in ADCO for onshore oil operations.

Highlighting the technical capabilities of Indian PSUs and their proven track record of executing several major projects abroad, Pradhan said that they were well qualified to undertake Engineering Procurement Contracts (EPC) Projects in the UAE. In this regard, he expressed interest of Engineers India Ltd (EIL) is keen to undertake EPC projects. He also suggested that there was considerable potential for establishing JVs in petrochemicals, fertilizers and project export sectors.

Pradhan expressed happiness that Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC) was working with Indian Strategic Petroleum Reserve Limited (ISPRL) on the strategic reserve project in Mangalore. He conveyed that the project was on track and will be concluded soon.

Pradhan briefed Mazrouei on the major projects in the hydrocarbon sector being taken up by Indian PSUs in various parts of India, such as OPaL project at Dahej Gujarat, BORL project at Bina, Madhya Pradesh, HPCL's integrated refinery cum petrochemical plant at Andhra Pradesh, etc. In this context, he sought investments from UAE in these important projects which were at various levels of maturity and development and required investment for the next 4 months to 4 years along with equity participation. He called UAE as India's preferred partner and expressed confidence that the UAE will take advantage of these investment opportunities in India. Given India's growing requirement of petroleum, Pradhan also said that India was trying to import more crude oil from UAE, he, accordingly, sought favourable terms for Indian oil companies for import of crude oil and LPG from the UAE.

Pradhan expressed confidence that the State visit of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi to India along with the our renewed political engagement in the last one year, the bilateral cooperation in trade and economy will reach new heights. In this regard, he expressed India's keenness to work with the UAE for benefiting mutually from the complementarities that exists between the economies, especially in the hydrocarbon sector.

Source: Press Information Bureau of India, New Delhi, <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx>

18. Relocation of the Camp Office of Embassy of India in Sana'a, Yemen in Djibouti to the Headquarters of Ministry of External Affairs in New Delhi, 25 February 2016

1. Consequent upon successful completion of Operation Rahat, it has been decided to relocate the Camp Office of Embassy of India in Sana'a, Yemen in Djibouti, to the Headquarters of the Ministry of External Affairs in New Delhi.

2. A Yemen Cell has been constituted within the Gulf Division in the Ministry which will look after the functions of Camp Office in Djibouti.

3. Embassy of India in Amman, Jordan, has been designated as the nodal point for issuing visa and other consular services to Yemeni nationals and Indian nationals resident in Yemen.

Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, [http://mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/26409/Relocation of the Camp Office of Embassy of India in Sanaa Yemen in Djibouti to the Headquarters of Ministry of External Affairs in New Delhi](http://mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/26409/Relocation_of_the_Camp_Office_of_Embassy_of_India_in_Sanaa_Yemen_in_Djibouti_to_the_Headquarters_of_Ministry_of_External_Affairs_in_New_Delhi)

Note: The Exact web links for the questions in the Indian Parliament are non-functional due to technical reasons. They can be searched through the question number or the name of the Member of Parliament concerned at the Websites <http://rajyasabha.nic.in/> of Rajya Sabha and <http://loksabha.nic.in/> of Lok Sabha.

1 Crore = 10 million. Lakh = 100,000

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