



# INDIA SPEAKS

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## BILATERAL ISSUES

### a. Bahrain

#### 1. Indian Warships Enter Manama (Bahrain) on a Four Day Visit, Manama, 16 May 2016

Indian Naval (IN) Ships Tarkash, Delhi and Deepak under the command of Flag Officer Commanding Western Fleet, Rear Admiral Ravneet Singh entered Manama today.

During the visit, the crew of IN ships will undertake professional interactions with the Royal Bahrain Naval Force (RBNF) pertaining to nuances of maritime operations, including means of combating maritime terrorism and piracy. In addition, calls on senior Government and military authorities, sporting and cultural interactions and sharing of best practices, aimed at enhancing cooperation as well as strengthening mutual understanding between the two navies, are also planned. The visiting IN ships are also likely to conduct exercises with the RBNF.

The current four day visit by IN ships will facilitate sharing of best practices, enhance maritime cooperation and evolve a shared understanding of the maritime security challenges, between the Indian Navy and the Royal Bahrain Naval Force. It will further bolster the strong bonds of friendship between India and Bahrain and enhance the security and stability in this vital part of the Indian Ocean Region. INS Delhi is commanded by Capt Sandeep Singh Sandhu, INS Tarkash is commanded by Capt Pradeep Singh, NM and INS Deepak is commanded by Capt Sujit Kumar Chhetri.

Bilateral relations between India and Bahrain are characterized by strong bonds of friendship based on cultural and economic ties dating back to ancient contacts between the Indus valley civilization in India and Dilmun civilization in Bahrain. Presence of over 350,000 Indian nationals, comprising nearly a third of Bahrain's total population is an important facet of this strong bilateral relationship. High level visits from both sides, rising trade and investment and growing convergence on counter-terrorism and security issues has provided new impetus to this

strong and age-old relationship. IN ships Delhi, Deepak, Trishul and Tabar had last visited Manama on September 2015. A delegation from the Royal Bahrain Naval Force also participated in the recently concluded International Fleet Review at Visakhapatnam, India.

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

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## **b. IRAN**

### **2. Official Visit of Prime Minister to Iran(22-23 May 2016), Tehran, 17 May 2016**

At the invitation of the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran Dr. Hassan Rouhani, Prime Minister Narendra Modi will pay an official visit to Iran on 22-23 May 2016. During the visit, the Prime Minister will call on the Supreme Leader of Iran and will hold talks on a wide range of subjects of mutual interest with President Dr. Rouhani.

India and Iran share longstanding civilizational ties. Iran is situated in India's extended neighbourhood and the two countries have significant overlap in their economic and security space. The visit of Prime Minister to Iran will seek to build on these commonalities by focusing on specific cooperation in regional connectivity and infrastructure, developing energy partnership, boosting bilateral trade, facilitating people-to-people interaction in various spheres and promoting peace and stability in the region.

The visit of Prime Minister will provide a timely thrust to the ongoing efforts of the two countries and their business entities to expand bilateral cooperation and mutually benefit from new opportunities in the wake of lifting of secondary sanctions against Iran earlier this year.

*Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, [http://mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/26825/Official\\_Visit\\_of\\_Prime\\_Minister\\_to\\_Iran\\_May\\_2223\\_2016](http://mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/26825/Official_Visit_of_Prime_Minister_to_Iran_May_2223_2016)*

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### **3. Transcript of Media Briefing on Prime Minister's forthcoming visit to Iran, New Delhi, 21 May 2016**

**Official Spokesperson (Vikas Swarup):** Good afternoon friends and welcome to the weekly press briefing. I have with me today Gopal Baglay who is our Joint Secretary dealing with Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran. He will brief you on Prime Minister's forthcoming visit to Iran which, as you know, we announced some time back. Gopal will give you the broad outline of the Prime Minister's programme in Tehran, what are the outcomes expected from the visit, and thereafter he will be open to taking questions. After that, JS (PAI) will leave and I will continue with my normal regular press briefing.

**Joint Secretary (PAI) (Gopal Baglay):** Thank you very much Vikas, Sir, and good afternoon everyone.

As you are aware, Prime Minister will pay a visit to Iran on 22 and 23 May 2016 at the invitation of the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The Prime Minister during his visit will call on the supreme leader the Grand Ayatollah Khamenei on 23 May and hold talks with President Dr. Rouhani following an official welcome accorded to the Prime minister on the same day.

The two leaders will discuss in depth bilateral relations between India and Iran and exchange views on regional situation and global issues of mutual interest. The Prime Minister and the President will then witness signing of bilateral documents and jointly address media. President Rouhani will host a lunch in honour of Prime Minister Modi.

Thereafter, a trilateral agreement on transport and transit corridor among India, Afghanistan and Iran will be signed at a separate event on the same day. It will highlight the significance India attaches to developing connectivity using Chabahar as a regional hub.

Prime Minister is also expected to visit a Gurdwara in Tehran and inaugurate an international conference titled 'India-Iran: Two Great Civilizations - Retrospect and Prospect' which will be organized by ICCR with Academy of Persian Language and Literature and other Iranian partners. The Prime Minister will also release a rare Persian manuscript brought out by ICCR at the event.

The visit of the Prime Minister to Iran will focus mainly on connectivity and infrastructure, energy partnership with Iran, boosting bilateral trade, promoting regular consultations on peace and stability particularly in our region and extended neighbourhood, and encouraging people-to-people contacts and relations between the two countries.

In the sphere of connectivity, as you would perhaps be aware, the bilateral contract on development and operation by India of Phase-I of the Chabahar port will be signed between Indian Ports Global Private Ltd and Arya Banadar of Iran. Documents on EXIM Bank's line of credit to Iran including for the port will be signed as well.

The trilateral agreement using Chabahar-Zahedan-Zaranj as a corridor will be a game changer for regional connectivity, especially for Afghanistan, which can find an assured and reliable alternative access to India via sea. The route will also significantly enhance prospects for India's connectivity with Afghanistan, Central Asia and beyond through synergies with other initiatives touching the region such as North-South transport corridor.

There is interest in Indian public and private sectors to invest in Chabahar free trade zone as also in railway projects in Iran. Progress on Farzad B gas field will elevate further India's energy partnership with Iran beyond a buyer-seller relationship. Discussions have moved towards commercial conclusion and financial closure in this regard.

A host of measures will be discussed between the two leaders to promote bilateral trade including expanding and strengthening the legal framework and more business-to-business interaction. Matters pertaining to restoring effective banking channels in the post-sanction phase will also be discussed.

Both Iran and India have stakes in peace and stability in the region which faces several challenges including terrorism and violent extremism. Discussions between the two leaders will

cover these aspects and will guide it further for regular consultations between the two countries at various levels in these and related areas such as cyber crime and maritime security.

Peace and stability in Afghanistan, on which the three countries, namely India, Iran and Afghanistan, held their first trilateral consultations last month in New Delhi, will also be discussed.

Prime Minister's visit to Iran will thus impart a timely impetus to the ongoing efforts of the two countries and their business entities to expand bilateral cooperation and mutually benefit from new opportunities in the wake of lifting of sanctions against Iran earlier this year. Deliberations between the two leaders will guide preparation of a roadmap for expanding and strengthening bilateral cooperation with Iran and cement our close civilizational ties in the contemporary context on the basis of shared interest. Thank you.

**Official Spokesperson:** Thank you Gopal for that very comprehensive statement. I do not think there should be any questions. But if there are still, you can ask.

**Question:** I just wanted to ask you about this Chabahar port. We have been talking about it for a long time. So far, what do we have? Do we have MOUs or what is on the ground?

**Joint Secretary (PAI):** You are right, the matter has been under discussion for a considerable period of time. Right now, we have very specific progress. What we are talking about is India's investment and participation in the first phase of Chabahar port which involves development of two terminals and five berths which have multi-cargo capacity. India will bring in an investment of upwards of US\$ 200 million in this regard, out of which EXIM Bank is extending a credit line of US\$ 150 million. So, right now we are talking about signing the commercial contract, which is the document, which is the culmination of the process set in the motion by signing off the MOU last year.

**Question:** There have been reports suggesting that Japan may partner with India to develop Chabahar. What kind of partnership is this going to be? Will it be confined to only Phase-1 or India and Japan together will complete all the phases and make it ready fast? What kind of time frame are we talking about to actualize using the Chabahar port?

**Joint Secretary (PAI):** As far as operationalizing and using Chabahar port itself through our bilateral engagement with Iran is concerned, the contract provides very specific timelines for that. I do not have those details but I do know that it provides very specific guidelines which are normal for such contracts and such projects the world over.

Insofar as your question about Japan is concerned, I think there can be synergies in promoting regional connectivity in the region and this is why the trilateral agreement between India, Iran and Afghanistan is being entered into. However, Chabahar is a port which is in Iran and therefore we need to consult our Iranian partners. And it will depend on the comfort level of all the

countries concerned, which parties can be involved in further development of such or similar projects.

**Question:** Since now the sanctions are over, is there any possibility of the revival of Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline? You also mentioned about Persian manuscript. Can you just elaborate on that?

**Joint Secretary (PAI):** As you know, as a growing economy we will have growing needs for energy resources and we are open to considering various options for evacuating these resources from Iran or other parts of the world closer to our home. Various options, various modalities can be considered. Insofar as the Persian manuscript is concerned, it is the old translation into Persian of Panchatantra and Jataka which is called Kalileh wa Demneh.

**Question:** Iran was investigating on Kulbhushan Jadhav's involvement. We don't know whether he was an innocent civilian trapped into some kind of sabotage or espionage or whether he was genuinely involved in some kind of activities. Have we heard anything from Iran on Jadhav or the investigation?

**Joint Secretary (PAI):** With due respect, I would think that this question does not pertain to Prime Minister's visit. Since my brief is to remain focused on Prime Minister's visit, that is what I would like to do.

**Question:** Can you give us an update on the payments for oil to Iran? Iran has been pressing India for early payment and it is learnt to be quite unhappy about the slow progress on this front.

**Joint Secretary (PAI):** First of all, I do not share your opinion or view that they are unhappy about it for the primary reason that in February when a delegation from the Central Bank of Iran visited India at the Deputy Governor's level, they held very fruitful discussions with the Deputy Governor of the Reserve Bank of India and the concerned Indian oil importers. As a result of that, an understanding was reached on the terms of repayment of these dues. We always believe that this money of course belongs to Iran and a modality has been worked out for that. The only question was finding the effective banking channels. As you would perhaps know, even after three-four months after the lifting of the sanctions in mid-January, it has not been easy to find corresponding banks. Our banks have made the efforts and they have significantly raised their efforts internationally and I am very hopeful that in the very near future, effective banking transfers can be made to Iran in this regard.

**Question:** What is the progress in North-South corridor? Is it already operational?

**Joint Secretary (PAI):** Again this is an area which is not directly related to the visit but yes certainly it does have a bearing on the connectivity aspect. In fact, the whole project of Chabahar-Zahedan-Zaranj can benefit enormously by connecting to North-South transport

corridor where it can become sort of a force multiplier. As far as North-South corridor is concerned, there has been a dry run of it in 2014 to demonstrate the feasibility of transport of goods through this track and this trial run was successful.

**Question:** Is Afghan President Ghani likely to sign the trilateral agreement...(Inaudible)...

**Joint Secretary (PAI):** What I can tell you is that the agreement is going to be signed at a high level, at ministerial level and since the Prime Minister's visit is being hosted by Iranian so graciously and gracefully, I would not like to comment on who else is going to be there or whether someone else is going to be there or not.

**Question:** Can you give us some more details about the scheduled meeting with the Supreme Leader because usually the Supreme Leader does not give an audience to visiting Heads of Government?

**Joint Secretary (PAI):** Maybe we can give you the details after the meeting? Will that be more useful?

**Question:** You mentioned about the phase-I of Chabahar project and you said US\$ 200 million would be Indian investment. What is the total investment that is going to go into phase-I and who are the other contributing parties for that investment?

**Joint Secretary (PAI):** I must say I don't have the details that you are asking me because my focus is on the Indian involvement in the phase-I and the five berths in the two terminals that I mentioned to you. I am afraid I don't have the figures that you have asked me.

**Official Spokesperson:** I think with that we have exhausted all the questions on the Prime Minister's forthcoming visit to Iran. Thank you very much.

(Concluded)

**Source:** Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, [http://mea.gov.in/media-briefings.htm?dtl/26836/Transcript\\_of\\_Media\\_Briefing\\_on\\_Prime\\_Ministers\\_forthcoming\\_visit\\_to\\_Iran\\_May\\_20\\_2016](http://mea.gov.in/media-briefings.htm?dtl/26836/Transcript_of_Media_Briefing_on_Prime_Ministers_forthcoming_visit_to_Iran_May_20_2016)

#### **4. PM offers prayers, addresses gathering at Bhai Ganga Singh Sabha Gurudwara, Tehran, 22 May 2016**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi paid respects to the Guru Granth Sahib at the Bhai Ganga Singh Sabha Gurudwara, shortly after arriving in Tehran this evening. He was presented with a Saropa and a Talwar. Addressing the gathering, the Prime Minister complimented the Sikh community in Tehran for keeping our rich heritage and traditions alive for the younger generations. He said Indians believe in Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam – the whole world is our family – and therefore assimilate with everyone easily.



The Prime Minister said that the occasion of the 350th birth anniversary of Guru Gobind Singh would be celebrated both in India and other parts of the world; and would be leveraged to highlight and generate greater awareness among the younger generation about the martyrdom of the Gurus, and the message of the Holy Guru Granth Sahib.

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

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### **5. Media Statement by Prime Minister during his visit to Iran, Tehran, 23 May 2016**

Your Excellency President Rouhani,

Friends,

Thank you,

Excellency for your warm and wise words,

I am also grateful to you for the gracious hospitality given to me and my delegation. On behalf of the 1.25 billion Indians, I extend warm greetings to the friendly people of Iran. Through ages, the beauty and richness of the Persian heritage has attracted the world to Iran. For me, visiting Iran, is indeed a great privilege.

Excellency,

India and Iran are not new friends. Our dosti is as old as history. Through centuries, our societies have stayed connected through art and architecture, ideas and traditions, and culture and commerce. As friends and neighbours, we have shared interest in each other's growth and prosperity, and joys and sorrows. We can never forget that Iran was among the first countries to come forward in support when earthquake struck my state, Gujarat, in 2001. Similarly, India is proud to have stood with the people of Iran during your difficult times. I compliment the leadership of Iran for their far-sighted diplomacy.

Excellency,

We had last met in Ufa in 2015. Your leadership and the clarity of your vision have deeply impressed me. In our meeting today, we focused on the full range of our bilateral engagement. We exchanged views on the emerging regional situation and global issues of common concern. The agenda and scope of our partnership is truly substantial. The outcomes and agreements signed today open a new chapter in our strategic partnership. The welfare of our people is guiding our broad based economic ties. Expanded trade ties, deeper connectivity, including Railways partnerships in oil and gas sector fertilizers education and cultural sphere are driving our overall economic engagement. The bilateral agreement to develop the Chabahar port and related infrastructure, and availability of about US\$ 500 million from India for this purpose, is an important milestone. This major effort would boost economic growth in the region. We are committed to take steps for early implementation of the agreements signed today.

Friends,

Later today we are going to sign the trilateral Transport and Transit Agreement with participation of Iran, India and Afghanistan. It will be a historic occasion. It will open new routes for India, Iran and Afghanistan to connect among themselves. India and Iran also share a crucial stake in

peace, stability and prosperity of the region. We also have shared concerns at the spread of forces of instability, radicalism and terror in our region. We have agreed to consult closely and regularly on combating threats of terrorism, radicalism, drug trafficking and cyber crime. We have also agreed to enhance interaction between our defence and security institutions on regional and maritime security.

Friends,

The past history of our ties has been rich. President Rouhani and I would leave no stone unturned to work for its glorious future. Our friendship will be a factor of stability in our region. Later today, I look forward to calling on His eminence the Hon'ble Supreme Leader to advance our ties further.

Excellency Rouhani,

I look forward to welcoming you in India to carry forward the agenda of our engagement. Where we are now and where we could be is most beautifully said in a couplet from Ghalib. Let me end with it:

... Once we make up our mind, the distance between Kaashi and Kaashan is only half a step]

I once again sincerely thank you, Excellency for inviting me to Iran.

I also thank you all.

*Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, [http://mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/26840/Media Statement by Prime Minister during his visit to Iran May 23 2016](http://mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/26840/Media+Statement+by+Prime+Minister+during+his+visit+to+Iran+May+23+2016)*

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**6. Speech by Prime Minister on the occasion of inauguration of Conference on "India and Iran, Two Great Civilizations: Retrospect and Prospects" and release of rare Persian manuscript, Tehran, 23 May 2016**

Excellency Hadid Adel, the Head of Farhingan

Dr Janati, the Minister of Cultural Affairs of Iran,

Distinguished scholars,

Ladies and gentlemen

The wise words of Dr. Adel and Dr. Janati before me have set the tone for this Conference. Your conference is most ideally timed. It is an occasion to recall and renew our centuries old association. It is also a perfect response to those who preach radical thoughts in our societies. It also fulfils a responsibility to familiarize our younger generations with the beauty and riches of our cultural heritage. No one is more qualified to shoulder this task than this gathering of learned men and scholars. I must particularly congratulate Dr. Adel, who has been ahead of the curve in realizing this need. His ongoing project to bring out Encyclopaedia on the Indian sub-continent in Persian would be of great service to researchers and scholars. It is indeed an honour and privilege to be amidst such a galaxy of scholars and thinkers of Iran.

Friends,



In the world of today, political pundits talk of strategic convergence. But, India and Iran are two civilizations that celebrate the meeting of our great cultures. The rare Persian manuscript Kalileh-wa-Dimneh, released just now, captures the close historical links between India and Iran. It is remarkable how the simple stories of the Indian classics of Jataka and Panchatantra became the Persian Kalileh-wa-Dimneh. It is a classic example of exchange and travel of cultural ideas between two societies. -A beautiful demonstration of how our two cultures and countries think alike. A true depiction of the wisdom of our ancient civilizations. For those with the sweet tooth it is ... from India. I cannot help but recall the lines from Hafez, though slightly reversed for the occasion:

...

All the nightingales of Iran get this fresh sweet arriving in Tehran from India  
Friends,

Centuries of free exchange of ideas and traditions, poets and craftsmen, art and architecture, culture and commerce have enriched both our civilizations. Our heritage has also been a source of strength and economic growth for our nations. The richness of Persian heritage is an integral part of the fabric of the Indian society. A part of Iranian culture lives in Indian hearts. And, a slice of Indian heritage is woven into the Iranian society. Our ancient heroes and epics bear striking parallels. The dargahs of Azmer Sharif and Hazrat Nizamuddin in India are equally revered in Iran. Mahabharata and Shahnama, Bhima and Rustam, Arjuna and Arsh exhibit similarity in our world views and values. Crafts like Zardozi, Guldozi and Chanderi may be a part of the Iranian society. They are equally common in India too. In the richness of Iranian culture, who can forget the poetry and beauty of its vehicle—the Persian language. In India, we regard it as one of our own. The great medieval poets of India have called the Persian and Sanskrit the two sisters. India's religious epic Ramayana which has seen over a dozen translations in Persian is known to have about 250 words of Persian. It served as a court language in medieval India. But, its popularity is also because it is written on the hearts of the Indians. It is taught in around 40 universities in India. All India Radio has been running the Persian language service for last 75 years. India has a proud collection of almost 5 million manuscripts of Persian in public and private collections. There are more than 20 million documents in Persian in National and State Archives. Many of these have common heritage as they were written by Iranian calligraphers and painted by Indian artists. In Salar Jung museum in Hyderabad, such a combination can be found in many manuscripts. A major effort to digitize all manuscripts, including Persian is currently underway in India. Every year, the President of India has conferred awards on the Persian Scholars.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As two ancient civilizations, we are known for our ability to be inclusive and welcoming to foreign cultures. Our contacts have not just refined our own cultures. They have also contributed to the growth of moderate and tolerant societies globally. Sufism a rich product of our ancient

links, carried its message of true love, tolerance and acceptance to the entire mankind. The spirit of Sufism is also reflected in the Indian concept of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam', the World as one family.

Friends,

India and Iran have always been partners and friends. Our historical ties may have seen their share of ups and downs. But, throughout our partnership has remained a source of boundless strength for both of us. Time has come for us to regain the past glory of traditional ties and links. Time has come for us to march together. In this endeavour, you, the eminent scholars have a defining role to play.

It is indeed my great pleasure to inaugurate the Conference "India and Iran, Two Great Civilizations: Retrospect and Prospects." In extending my best wishes for the success of your conference, I would also keenly look to receive the ideas that emerge out of your discussions. I am happy to see that ICCR and Farhangistan have worked closely to organize this Conference. Your deliberations indeed provide a body of strength to our literary, academic and people to people ties.

Let me thank you all once again for inviting me.

I wish all you and the conference only the very best.

Shukran,

Thank you.

*Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, [http://mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/26839/Speech by Prime Minister on the occasion of inauguration of Conference on India and Iran Two Great Civilizations Retrospect and Prospects and re lease](http://mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/26839/Speech%20by%20Prime%20Minister%20on%20the%20occasion%20of%20inauguration%20of%20Conference%20on%20India%20and%20Iran%20Two%20Great%20Civilizations%20Retrospect%20and%20Prospects%20and%20re%20lease)*

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## **7. Remarks by Prime Minister at Chabahar Connectivity event, Tehran, 23 May 2016**

Your Excellency Dr. Hassan Rouhani, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran,

Your Excellency Dr. Ashraf Ghani, President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

Honourable Ministers

Ladies and Gentlemen

A famous poet of Persia, Hafez once said:

Days of separation are over; night of wait is coming to an end; Our friendship will stay forever.

Today, we are all witnessing creation of history. Not just for the people of our three countries, but for the entire region. To build bonds of connectivity is the most basic of human urges. Today, we seek to fulfil it. We are grateful to Excellency Rouhani for hosting this unique event. Thank you President Ashraf Ghani for your presence. It truly holds a special significance. It is a privilege to be here. Excellency Rouhani, President Ghani and I have just held detailed discussions on a range of issues. The agenda for economic engagement is a clear priority for us. We stand together in unity of our purpose. To carve out new routes of peace, and prosperity is

our common goal. We want to link with the world. But, better connectivity among ourselves is also our priority. It is indeed a new dawn for the region.

Excellencies,

Iran, Afghanistan and India are deeply aware of the richness and reality of our ancient links. Through centuries, art and culture, ideas and knowledge, language and traditions have formed a common bond between us. Even through turmoil of history, our societies never lost touch with each other. Today, we meet to write new chapters in our engagement.

Excellencies, The Agreement on the establishment of a Trilateral Transport and Transit Corridor signed just a while ago can alter the course of history of this region. It is a new foundation of convergence between our three nations. The corridor would spur unhindered flow of commerce throughout the region. Inflow of capital and technology could lead to new industrial infrastructure in Chabahar. This would include gas based fertilizer plants, petrochemicals, pharmaceuticals and IT. The key arteries of the corridor would pass through the Chabahar port of Iran. Its very location, on the mouth of Gulf of Oman, is of great strategic significance. Afghanistan will get an assured, effective, and a more friendly route to trade with the rest of the world. The arc of economic benefit from this agreement would extend beyond our three nations. Its reach could extend to the depths of the Central Asian countries. When linked with the International North South Transport Corridor, it would touch South Asia at one end and Europe at another. And, studies show that as compared to the traditional sea routes, it could bring down the cost and time of the cargo trade to Europe by about 50 percent . Over time, we could even look to connect it with the strong sea and land based routes that India has developed with the Indian Ocean Region and South East Asia.

Excellencies,

The world of 21st century offers unique opportunities. But, it also poses its own set of challenges. Today, the nature of global engagement requires an attitude more suitable to this century, not the mindset of the century gone by. Today, the watch-words of international ties are trust not suspicion; cooperation not dominance; inclusivity not exclusion. This is also the guiding philosophy and driving spirit of the Chabahar Agreement. This will be a corridor of peace and prosperity for our peoples. Motives of economic growth, and empowerment would drive it. It will build our security without making others vulnerable. It would break barriers among our nations and encourage new benchmarks of people-to-people contacts. And, help us to eventually build what we all desire and deserve - a friendly and healthy neighbourhood.

Excellencies,

The world around us is changing in fundamental ways. And, the lack of comprehensive connectivity is not the only challenge that limits our national growth. Political turmoil and undercurrents of economic stress continue to spread in West Asia. In the Indo-Pacific, rise a mix of political competition and economic opportunities is putting pressure on the existing Asian

order. Global economy is yet to fully come out of uncertainty and weakness. Our present growth and future prosperity is under threat from the spread of radical ideas and physical terror. Amidst this landscape, our three countries are blessed with the most potent resource—our youth. Our three nations are estimated to have more than 60 percent of their population under 30 years of age. They are an asset in our national and regional development. We want them to walk the road to knowledge and skills; industry and enterprise. And, not fall victim to the path of guns and violence. I am confident that economic fruits of the Chabahar Agreement will expand trade, attract investment, build infrastructure, develop industry and create jobs for our youth. The Agreement will strengthen our ability to stand in mutual support against those whose only motto is to maim and kill the innocents. Its success will be a positive vote for peace and stability in the region.

Excellencies,

It is my strong belief that trade and transit routes should only be a starting point of our journey to greater connectivity. In my vision, the full spectrum of connectivity agenda between Iran, Afghanistan and India should span:

- From culture to commerce;
- From traditions to technology;
- From Investments to IT;
- From services to strategy; and
- From people to politics.

In a way, it is a pledge to:

- Realize the imperative of better connectivity;
- Establish peace and create stability;
- Build economic prosperity and engineer new trade ties;
- Curb radicalism and remove shadows of terror; and
- Break barriers and spread sweetness of familiarity among our people.

History will look back at this effort with nothing but approval and admiration.

I compliment Excellencies Rouhani and Ghani for their leadership in guiding this effort.

Thank you all. Thank you very much.

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

### **c. ISRAEL**

#### **8. President of India's message on the eve of National Day of Israel, New Delhi, 2 May 2016**

The President of India Pranab Mukherjee has extended his greetings and felicitations to Government and people of the State of Israel on the occasion of their National Day (3 May 2016).

In a message to H.E. Reuven Rivlin, President of the State of Israel, the President has said, “It gives me immense pleasure to extend, on behalf of the Government and people of India and on

my own behalf, felicitations to you and the friendly people of the State of Israel on the occasion of your National Day.

Our common commitment to the safeguarding of our democratic institutions and our shared values of liberty, freedom and equality have helped in forging a deep friendship between our two nations. At the political level, our relations have been enhanced by frequent exchanges of visits which have served to deepen our mutual understanding and strengthen our resolve to work together to tackle the development challenges of the 21st century.

During my first State Visit to Israel in October 2015, I was touched by the goodwill for India amongst the people and leadership of Israel. I am happy to convey that this feeling is mutual and that we, in India, regard Israel with profound respect for its proud achievements. I very much valued our frank discussions that will, no doubt contribute to reinforcing our ties and building new bonds of trust and partnership between our peoples.

The innovative solutions developed in Israel – using advanced technology to address agricultural, water and urban development challenges offer promising avenues for bilateral cooperation and collaboration. India has welcomed Israeli participation in our flagship programmes like Make in India, Clean Ganga, Digital India, and Smart City initiatives.

Excellency, I am confident that our two countries will continue to achieve new heights in our bilateral cooperation for the benefit of our two peoples in the years to come.

Please accept, Excellency, my best wishes for your personal well being”.

*Source: Press Information Bureau, New Delhi,*

<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=144639>

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#### **d. JORDAN**

##### **9. President of India's Message on the Eve of Independence Day of Jordan, New Delhi, 25 May 2016**

The President of India Pranab Mukherjee has extended his greetings and felicitations to the King and people of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan on the eve of their Independence Day (25 May 2016).

In a message to His Majesty King Abdullah II, the King of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the President has said, “I have immense pleasure in extending warm greetings and felicitations to you and to the friendly people of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan on the occasion of your Independence Day.

India and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan enjoy excellent bilateral relations. Last year, we celebrated the 65th Anniversary of our diplomatic relations. I warmly recall my first State Visit to Jordan in October 2015. We had very constructive and forward looking discussions. I

understand that decisions taken during this visit are now being implemented in various sectors to further enhance and enrich our bilateral cooperation. Jordan's profile in our food security is growing – with additional supplies of phosphate minerals, including from the joint venture plant jointly inaugurated with Your Majesty during my recent visit to Amman.

I am confident that given the complementarities in our mutual interests, the bilateral relationship between India and Jordan will be further intensified in the years to come.

I take this opportunity to extend my best wishes for Your Majesty's well being and good health, as well as for the continued progress and prosperity of the friendly people of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan".

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

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#### **e. KUWAIT**

##### **10. Indian Embassy in association with Heartfulness Meditation organized Relaxation & Meditation session, Kuwait, 6 May 2016**

Indian Embassy in association with Heartfulness Meditation organized a meditation session at the Embassy auditorium on 6 May 2016. This Event was organized as a run up to the main event before the 2nd International Yoga Day 2016 celebrations on 24 June 2016. The session started with a brief introduction to Heartfulness meditation by their Country Organizer, Balaji Srinivasan. Then, there was a practical session of Heartfulness Relaxation Technique. They can be contacted on kwt@heartfulness.org or sahajmargkwt@gmail.com to organize an introductory session.

The Indian Embassy is organizing 2nd International Day of Yoga at the Embassy Auditorium on Friday, 24 June 2016 from 0600 hours onwards. We would request all enthusiasts to register at the Embassy Website for the 24th June event to make it a grand success.

*Source: Embassy of India, Kuwait, <http://www.indembkwt.org/DispNews.aspx?ID=941>*

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##### **11. Advisory for Indian Nationals resident in Kuwait, Kuwait, 8 May 2016**

In view of on-going security drive, Indian nationals residing in Kuwait are advised to comply with the residency and visa laws of the country and keep their Civil ID (or Passport) with them for showing to the security officials during security checks. Some expatriates have been arrested in Kuwait due to overstaying their residence visas and for other violations. Furthermore, there are reports about expatriates holding domestic worker visa (Visa Article No. 20) being arrested as they were working in construction/private sectors, in violation of residency/visa rules. It is, therefore, incumbent upon all those holding Kuwaiti employment visa (Visa No. 18 or Visa 20) not to violate rules and regulations of Kuwait to stay legally in the country.

The Embassy will continue to issue Travel documents (Emergency Certificates) to Indian nationals facing deportation, particularly to those whose passport could not be retrieved from their sponsors. During the last four months (January – April 2016), a total of 2,220 Emergency



Certificates (Travel Documents) were issued by the Indian Embassy to facilitate repatriation of Indian nationals in detention in Kuwait. The Embassy would continue to assist Indian nationals overstaying in Kuwait for their repatriation by issuing travel documents (Emergency Certificates).

*Source: Embassy of India, Kuwait, <http://www.indembkwt.org/DispNews.aspx?ID=940>*

## **12. Comprehensive advisory for the benefit and welfare of Indian community, Kuwait, 10 May 2016**

A Comprehensive advisory is given below for the benefit and welfare of Indian community in Kuwait.

### **Do's and Don'ts**

- Indian emigrants are advised to retain their original passports as they are non-transferable Government of India documents. Passport should not be handed to Recruiting Agent /Foreign Employer for emigration clearance before being selected.
- Please ensure that you are not carrying any edible items with you.
- Possession of drugs and narcotics may result to life imprisonment or death sentence in Kuwait.
- Kindly ensure that you have employment Visa if you are going for employment. Any other visa will render you an illegal emigrant in the country if you are found to have been employed there.
- The moment one reaches the destination, please leave two names and telephone numbers of local contacts residing there with your family in India along with the address and telephone number of Embassy of India in Kuwait ( Telephone:22530600 , 22530612 - 14 ).
- If you are going as unskilled or domestic worker, kindly ensure that your employment documents are pre-attested by the Indian Mission in Kuwait of your proposed employment. Ladies below the age of 30 years going as housemaids are not eligible for employment abroad in ECR countries. For Kuwait, the employment of female domestic workers has been discontinued since 12.12.2014.
- If you are going abroad, leave a photocopy-set at home, of all your travel and employment documents.
- Be sure of your Recruiting Agent. Ask him to show his Registration Certificate issued by the Protector General of Emigrants, Govt. of India. Do not deal with him unless he is registered and the registration is valid. In case of doubt, check with any of the offices of the Protectors of Emigrants (POEs) or the Protector General of Emigrants (PGE).
- DO NOT deal with sub-agents as they are not permitted under the Emigration Act, 1983 and Rules.
- Ask the Recruiting Agent to show to you the Demand Letter and Power of Attorney from the foreign employer.
- Also carefully go through the Employment Contract detailing the salary/wage levels and other service conditions.

- DO NOT pay more than the equivalent of wages for forty five days as offered under the employment contract, subject to maximum of Rupees Twenty Thousand in respect of services provided and take a receipt of this payment.
- Pay preferably by Demand Draft or Cheque and obtain a receipt. Complaints of overcharging or cheating can be lodged with the concerned POE or with the Protector General of Emigrants (PGE).

### **Few Words for Indian Nurses:**

- Following intervention by the Embassy to stop irregularities in the recruitment of Indian nurses for work in Kuwait, the recruitment of Indian nurses for overseas employment in 17 ECR countries (both Private hospitals and Government hospitals) has been restricted through four State-run recruiting agencies namely; NORKA Roots, Kerala, Overseas Development and Employment Consultants (ODEPC), Kerala, Overseas Manpower Corporation Limited (OMCL) Chennai and Uttar Pradesh Financial Corporation through e-Migrate system.
- The Nurse profession has been placed under ECR regime. In other words, emigration clearance is now mandatory for them for seeking employment in any of the 17 ECR countries.
- There are reports of some unscrupulous agencies recruiting Indian nurses for Kuwait by arranging interview in a third country, in violation of regulations issued by the Government of India. One should resist such offers and inform the Embassy and the concerned Indian authorities.
- No advance money to be paid to any agent in India or in Kuwait.
- One should register and approach the above 4 designated agencies of State Manpower Corporations for seeking employment as a nurse in Kuwait.

### **Check before Departure**

- Please ensure that designation/category is same on your visa for which you have been recruited.
- Before departure the emigrant should collect all the numbers of Indian Missions of the country where he/she is going.
- Ensure you have a valid Passport at least for six months. A valid Visa must be either stamped on or accompany your Passport. Always keep a photocopy of your Passport and Visa.
- You must possess a copy of the Employment Contract signed by you and your foreign employer duly attested by the registered recruiting agent.
- Insist on a copy of Employment Contract in English duly authenticated by the recruiting agent.
- Open a Saving Bank N.R.E. Account in one of the Banks in India to enable you to send your remittances from abroad.

Acquaint yourself with local labour laws, working and living conditions of the country of employment. Keep complete address of the Indian Embassy with you.

### **In The Country Of Your Employment (Kuwait)**

- Obtain a Resident Permit or Identity Card, Labour Card or IQUAMA. DO NOT part with your Passport and copy of Employment Contract signed by you in India, at any cost.
- DO NOT sign any other Employment Contract or any blank paper. DO NOT strike work or resort to agitations. These are illegal under local labour laws. You could be arrested, imprisoned and also deported.
- AVOID all sexual contacts that may result in AIDS – a dreaded disease.

Keep in touch with the nearest Indian Embassy in Kuwait and report any complaints about non-payment or delayed payment of wages or compensations or any other problem to the Indian Embassy in Kuwait.

### **Customs Formalities**

- Personal baggage – Customs checking is VERY STRICT. Kindly co-operate with the Customs staff at the International Airport. Ensure that you do not carry any narcotics or alcoholic drinks. Alcohol is strictly prohibited. Its consumption is a serious offence attracting severe punishment.
- DO NOT accept any unchecked parcel from any one. If you have to take a parcel for someone, check thoroughly that it does not contain alcohol or narcotics. Otherwise, it may land you in serious difficulties on arrival in the country of employment.

### **Religion**

- The State religion of all countries in the Gulf (and in Malaysia) is ISLAM. Public practice of any other religion is strictly prohibited.

### **Precautions**

- You must make and keep a photocopy of all the pages of your Passport. DO NOT lose your Passport or its photocopy.
- By chance if you misplace your Passport, inform the nearest Indian Mission immediately giving them details, i.e. Passport number, date and place of issue, your name and date of your entry in the country of employment. You can give these details only if you keep a photocopy of your Passport.
- Do not lose your copy of Employment Contract. Make photocopies and keep them with you always.
- You must have a full name, address, telephone/fax number of your foreign employer, before you leave India.

- If you have difficulty in locating your foreign employer, contact the nearest Indian Mission immediately.
- Do not accept temporary or permanent employment with another person or establishment other than that the sponsoring Company/ establishment/ person. Employment with persons other than your original sponsor is strictly prohibited and attracts severe punishment.
- Before the Visa or Employment Contract expires, get them renewed. If you are returning to India for a short while during the tenure of your Employment Contract abroad, ensure that the validity period of Visa does not expire before you return to the country of employment.
- Also ensure that your Passport is valid. At least six months before it is about to expire, get it revalidated from the concerned Indian Mission abroad or from the Regional Passport Office (RPO) in India.

### **Final Notes**

1. No cremation facilities are available in Kuwait. Mortal remains need to be airlifted to India for this purpose. Burial facility is available to all expatriates.
2. The above suggestions are not exhaustive. A list of Indian Embassy officers is available on the website. Your suggestions/comments or views are most welcome.

*Source: Embassy of India, Kuwait, <http://www.indembkwt.org/DispNews.aspx?ID=942>*

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### **f. LIBYA**

#### **13. Travel ban on Indian nationals travelling to Libya, New Delhi, 23 May 2016**

In view of prevailing security situation in Libya, security threats and challenges to lives of Indian nationals in Libya, the Government of India has decided to impose travel ban on Indian nationals planning to travel to Libya irrespective of the purpose. All Immigration authorities have been notified in this respect. Indian nationals may please take note of the travel ban for compliance. The travel ban is effective from 3 May 2016 till further orders.

*Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, [http://mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/26842/Travel\\_ban\\_on\\_Indian\\_nationals\\_travelling\\_to\\_Libya](http://mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/26842/Travel_ban_on_Indian_nationals_travelling_to_Libya)*

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### **g. OMAN**

#### **14. Visit of Indian Warships to Muscat, 21 May 2016**

Indian Naval (IN) Ships Delhi, Tarkash and Deepak under the Command of the Flag Officer Commanding Western Fleet, Rear Admiral Ravneet Singh are visiting Muscat from 21 – 24 May 2016. The visit of IN ships coincides with the visit of the Hon'ble Defence Minister of India Manohar Parrikar from 20 – 22 May 2016.

During the visit, the crew of IN ships will undertake professional interactions with the Royal Navy of Oman pertaining to nuances of maritime operations, including means of combating maritime terrorism and piracy. In addition, calls on senior Government and military authorities, sporting and cultural interactions and sharing of best practices, aimed at enhancing cooperation,

strengthening ties and mutual understanding between the two navies, are also planned. The visiting IN ships are also likely to conduct exercises with the Royal Navy of Oman.

Bilateral relations between India and Oman have been historically strong based on deep cultural affinity and vibrant economic linkages. In modern times, these were formally established with the 1953 Indo-Oman Treaty of Friendship, Navigation and Commerce, a first between India and any Arab country. The signing of a MoU on Defence Cooperation in December 2005 and the subsequent establishment of the Joint Military Cooperation Committee in March 2006 has set the foundation for increased defence cooperation. Since then, naval cooperation between the countries has progressed steadily with increased port visits by naval ships and training of RNO personnel by the Indian Navy in hydrography, diving, training, logistics and dockyard management. India and Oman are also members of Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS), a voluntary and co-operative initiative between 30 countries of the Indian Ocean Region, which has served as an ideal forum for sharing of information and cooperation on maritime issues. Oman also supports Indian Navy's anti-piracy patrols in the Gulf of Aden by providing OTR facilities. The successful conduct of bilateral biennial naval exercise 'Naseem Al-Bahr' off the Indian Coast in February 2016 has reinforced the strong ties between the two navies. The Royal Navy of Oman's participation in the recently concluded International Fleet Review at Visakhapatnam, India with two ships viz. RNOV Al Shamikh and RNOV Al Seeb, is another indicator of the close ties between the two Navies.

The current visit would be another milestone in the strong maritime relationship between the countries. It will strengthen mutual understanding, facilitate sharing of best practices and enhance interoperability. It will enable a common understanding of the security challenges in the region and contribute to security and stability of this vital part of the Indian Ocean Region.

INS Delhi is commanded by Captain Sandeep Singh Sandhu, INS Tarkash is commanded by Capt Pradeep Singh, and INS Deepak is commanded by Capt Sujit Kumar Chhetri.

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

### **15. Visit of Indian Naval Ships to Oman, New Delhi, 21 May 2016**

Indian Naval Ships Deepak, Tarkash and Delhi, under the Command of Flag Officer Commanding Western Fleet, Rear Admiral Ravneet Singh, will visit Muscat from 21 – 24 May 2016. The Ships are part of Indian Navy's Western Naval Command, based at Mumbai, and are on a month-long deployment in the Gulf region to enhance bilateral ties with friendly regional Navies. During the visit to Muscat, the Ships will have professional interactions with Royal Navy of Oman for enhancing co-operation and sharing their experiences in naval operations, including disaster management and combating maritime threats of terrorism and piracy. Apart from professional interactions, sports and social engagements for the crew are also planned, which are aimed at enhancing co-operation and understanding between the Indian and Omani Navies.

There is a historical tradition of maritime interaction between India and Oman, dating back to several millennia. Indian Navy today is the largest resident Navy in Indian Ocean Region, with multi-dimensional capability, comprising aircraft carriers, modern ships, submarines, aircraft and marine commandos. A notable feature of Indian Navy's force structure is the fact that an overwhelming majority of its Ships are designed and built in India.

Indian Navy has close and friendly ties with the Navies of the Gulf region and has been regularly exercising with many of them. It has also been providing training and hydrographic support to several Navies in the Region. The involvement of Indian Naval Ships in combating piracy off the coast of Somalia, since October 2008, has further strengthened bilateral ties and interactions with Navies in the Region.

Bilateral relations between India and Oman were formally established with 1953 Indo-Oman Treaty of Friendship, Navigation and Commerce. The MoU on Defence Cooperation, which was signed in Dec 2005, provides the framework for defence cooperation between the two countries. The India - Oman Joint Military Cooperation Committee, set up in Mar 2006, has been providing direction for increased defence cooperation. Naval cooperation between the two countries has progressed steadily with increased port visits by Naval Ships and training of RNO personnel by Indian Navy in hydrography, diving, training management, logistics management and dockyard management. The biennial Naval Exercise 'Naseem Al-Bahr' has enhanced inter-operability between the two Navies.

The last Joint Naval Exercise, off the Indian coast, in Feb 2016, was a great success. India and Oman are also members of Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS), a voluntary and co-operative initiative amongst 35 countries of the Indian Ocean Region, which has served as a Forum for sharing information and promoting cooperation on maritime issues.

The current visit of the Indian Naval Ships to the Gulf region, including Muscat, seeks to underscore India's peaceful presence and solidarity with friendly countries in the Gulf region and strengthen the bonds of friendship between India and Oman.

**Source:** *Embassy of India, Kuwait,* <http://www.indemb-oman.org/inner.aspx?type=AllPressRelease&id=0#collapseOne3>

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### **16. Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar Visits Oman, New Delhi, 22 May 2016**

The Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar paid an official visit to the Sultanate of Oman from 20 to 22 May 2016 at the invitation of H.E. Bader Bin Saud Bin Harib Al Busaidi, Minister Responsible for Defence Affairs of Oman.

During his visit, the Defence Minister met Deputy Prime Minister for the Council of Ministers His Highness Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmoud Al Said, Minister of Royal Office HE Lt Gen. Sultan bin Mohammed Al Nu'amani and held bilateral talks with Minister Responsible for Defence



Affairs H.E. Bader Bin Saud Bin Harib Al Busaidi. During the meetings all aspects of bilateral defence cooperation including enhanced military to military exchanges were discussed. Both sides also exchanged views on regional developments of mutual interest.

Parrikar reiterated the high importance that India attaches to its strategic partnership with Oman. He conveyed his appreciation at the continued support rendered by Oman for the Operational Turnaround (OTR) of Indian Navy ships for anti-piracy patrols as well as technical support for landing and over flight of Indian Air Force aircraft.

The Minister visited the Military Technology College and the Sultan's Armed Forces Museum in Muscat. He also attended a reception at Sultan Qaboos Port to mark the goodwill visit to Oman of INS Delhi, INS Deepak and INS Tarkash.

Four Memorandum of Understanding (MOUs)/agreements were signed during the visit. These are:

- MOU on Defence Cooperation between the Ministry of Defence of Sultanate of Oman and Ministry of Defence of Republic of India;
- MOU between the Royal Oman Police (Coast Guard) and the Indian Coast Guard in the field of Marine Crime Prevention at Sea;
- MOU between the Government of the Sultanate of Oman and the Government of the Republic of India on Maritime Issues; and
- Protocol between the Government of the Sultanate of Oman represented by Royal Air Force of Oman and the Government of India represented by the Indian Air Force on Flight Safety information Exchange.

Both sides noted that defence cooperation is a key facet of their bilateral strategic partnership, which is based on historical ties as well as mutual trust and shared interests. It was agreed that the two sides would further expand and consolidate their ongoing bilateral defence cooperation.

The Defence Minister was accompanied by a high-level official delegation comprising Secretary (Defence Production) Ashok Gupta, Secretary (R&D) & DG, DRDO Dr S. Christopher, Vice Chief of Army Staff Lt. Gen MMS Rai, FOC-in-C Western Naval Command Vice Admiral Sunil Lanba, Vice Chief of Air Staff Air Marshal BS Dhanoa and other senior defence ministry officials. A defence industry delegation comprising Additional DG, Ordnance Factory Board SC Bajpai and CMD, Bharat Electronics Limited S.K. Sharma also accompanied the Defence Minister.

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

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## **h. QATAR**

**17. Memorandum of Understanding between India and Qatar for promoting bilateral cooperation in the field of Information Communication Technology, New Delhi, 4 May 2016**

The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi was apprised of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed in March 2015. The MoU was ratified by both India and Qatar on 1 January 2016 and 12 January 2016 respectively for promoting bilateral cooperation in the field of Information Communication Technology (ICT).

The MoU will result in active cooperation and exchanges between the private entities, capacity building institutions, Governments and other public organizations of the two countries in the field of ICT.

*Source: Press Information Bureau, New Delhi,*  
<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=144861>

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### **18. Visit of Prime Minister to the State of Qatar (4-5 June 2016), New Delhi, 20 May 2016**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is paying an official visit to the State of Qatar from 4-5 June 2016 at the invitation of the Emir of Qatar, His Highness Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani. This is the highest-level visit from India to Qatar since the visit of the then Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh to Doha in 2008.

There has been regular exchange of high-level bilateral visits in the recent past. The Emir of Qatar HH Sheikh Tamim had visited India in March 2015. Previously, the then Emir of Qatar HH Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani had visited India in 1999, 2005 and 2012.

India's historical and close relations with Qatar are marked by mutually beneficial commercial exchanges and extensive people to people contacts. Qatar is an important trading partner for us in the Gulf region with bilateral trade in 2014-15 exceeding US\$ 15 billion. It is our largest supplier of LNG requirements, accounting for 65 percent of our total imports in 2015-16. It was also one of our key sources of crude oil.

Over 6,30,000 Indian nationals form the largest expatriate community in Qatar. Their positive contribution in the progress and development of their host country is well recognized.

During the forthcoming visit, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Emir of Qatar HH Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani will hold discussions on bilateral, regional and multilateral issues of mutual interest.

*Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi,* [http://mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/26832/Visit\\_of\\_Prime\\_Minister\\_to\\_the\\_State\\_of\\_Qatar\\_June\\_45\\_2016](http://mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/26832/Visit_of_Prime_Minister_to_the_State_of_Qatar_June_45_2016)

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## **i. TUNISIA**

### **19. Visit of Vice President to Tunisia (2-3 June 2016), New Delhi, 26 May 2016**

Hon'ble Vice President, M Hamid Ansari, accompanied by his wife Salma Ansari, will be visiting Tunisia from 2-3 June 2016 at the invitation of the Prime Minister of Tunisia His Excellency Habib Essid. He will be accompanied by the Minister of State for Chemicals and Fertilizers Hansraj Gangaram Ahir, four Members of Parliament, senior officials and media.

India has very cordial bilateral relations with Tunisia. The economic cooperation between the two countries is deepening with Indian investments in phosphate sector. During this visit, further avenues of cooperation in various areas of growth would be discussed.

During this visit, the Vice President would be holding discussions in Tunis with His Excellency the President Beji Caid Essebsi and His Excellency the Prime Minister Habib Essid on a wide range of issues of shared common interest.

The Vice President would be received by the President of the Assembly of the Representatives of the People of Tunisia where he would be meeting with Tunisian multiparty Members of Parliament and Tunisian-India Parliamentary Group. The Vice President would deliver a key note address to the Tunisian Diplomatic Corps and leading scholars and think tanks at the Tunisian Institute for Strategic Studies.

*Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, [http://mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/26849/Visit\\_of\\_Vice\\_President\\_to\\_Tunisia\\_June\\_0203\\_2016](http://mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/26849/Visit_of_Vice_President_to_Tunisia_June_0203_2016)*

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## **j. UAE**

### **20. Memorandum of Understanding between Reserve Bank of India and Central Bank of United Arab Emirates on co-operation concerning currency swap agreement, New Delhi, 4 May 2016**

The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi has given its ex-post facto approval for the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed in February 2016 between Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and Central Bank of United Arab Emirates (UAE) on co-operation concerning currency swap agreement.

The MoU commits that RBI and Central Bank of UAE will consider signing a bilateral Currency Swap Agreement on mutually agreed terms and conditions, after undertaking technical deliberations, subject to the concurrence of respective Governments.

The MoU will further strengthen the close economic relationship and cooperation between India and United Arab Emirates. The swap agreement is also expected to facilitate invoicing of bilateral trade in local currencies

*Source: Press Information Bureau, New Delhi, <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=144857>*

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### **21. Agreement between India and UAE, New Delhi, 4 May 2016**

The Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship Rajiv Pratap Rudy has said that the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship on 29 April 2016 signed a Memorandum of Understanding with National Qualifications Authority of United Arab Emirates (UAE) on cooperation for Skill development and mutual recognition of qualifications. Key areas of cooperation are as below:

- Joint accreditation of training providers catering to trainings aimed at overseas migration from India to the Gulf region.
- Cooperate on knowledge sharing and capacity building support for the national qualifications frameworks of respective parties
- Cooperate in conducting joint studies or pilot research projects on labour market and skills development issues
- Foster cooperation through networking and conferences
- Exchange visits of qualifications framework experts and vocational training instructors and other experts, managers and technical staff.
- Promote access by UAE employers to information and data on qualified Indian workforce supply.

In a written reply in the Lok Sabha the Minister said, “No assessment as such under the MoU has been undertaken so far.” U.A.E is second single largest destination for workforce migration from India to the Gulf after Saudi Arabia. Mutual recognition of qualifications and sharing data under MoU would facilitate trained and skilled Indian workers to access employment opportunities in UAE.

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

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## **22. Visit of Indian Warships to Dubai (UAE), Abu Dhabi, 7 May 2016**

In a demonstration of India’s commitment to maritime relations with countries in the Gulf, Indian Naval Ships Delhi, Tarkash and Deepak under the Command of the Flag Officer Commanding Western Fleet, Rear Admiral Ravneet Singh, NM have arrived at Dubai on a four day visit. INS Delhi is commanded by Capt Sandeep Singh Sandhu, INS Tarkash is commanded by Capt Pradeep Singh, NM and INS Deepak is commanded by Capt Sujit Kumar Chhetri.

During the visit, the crew of IN ships will undertake professional interactions with the UAE Navy towards enhancing co-operation between the two forces. In addition, calls on senior Government and military authorities, sporting and cultural interactions and sharing of best practices, aimed at strengthening mutual understanding between the two navies, are also planned. The visiting IN ships are also likely to conduct exercises with the UAE Navy.

Bilateral relations between India and UAE are characterized by strong bonds of friendship based on cultural and economic ties dating back to nearly 3000 BC. These have been further strengthened in recent times by a vibrant economic relationship and growing convergence on security issues. UAE is India’s second largest trading partner and Indians are the largest expatriate community in the UAE. The visit of Narendra Modi, the Hon’ble Prime Minister of India to UAE in August 2015 heralded the beginning of a comprehensive strategic partnership, wherein both nations agreed to cooperate in maritime security and strengthen defence relations. Manohar Parrikar, the Hon’ble Defence Minister of India is scheduled to visit UAE from 18 – 19 May 16.

Maritime cooperation between the two countries has increased steadily since the inaugural Navy-to-Navy Staff Talks in January 2007. Reciprocal port visits, high-level delegations and training exchanges have further bolstered naval cooperation between the two countries. IN ships last visited UAE in September 2015 wherein Delhi, Deepak, Trishul and Tabar berthed at Dubai. India and UAE are also members of Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS), a voluntary and co-operative initiative between 30 countries of the Indian Ocean Region, which has served as an ideal forum for sharing of information and cooperation on maritime issues. UAE hosted the 2010 edition of IONS at Abu Dhabi.

The current visit seeks to bolster the strong bonds of friendship between India and UAE and contribute to security and stability in this vital part of the Indian Ocean Region.

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

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**23. Memorandum of Understanding between Securities and Exchange Board of India and Financial Services Regulatory Authority, Abu Dhabi for Mutual Co-operation and Technical Assistance, New Delhi, 12 May 2016**

The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi has given its approval for signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) and Financial Services Regulatory Authority (FSRA), Abu Dhabi for mutual co-operation and technical assistance between the two regulators.

The MoU will promote further development of economic links and cooperation between the two signatories and will help create conditions for development of securities markets in the two countries. It would also contribute towards strengthening the information sharing framework between the two regulators.

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

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**24. General Framework Agreement on Renewable Energy Cooperation, New Delhi, 12 May 2016**

The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi was apprised of a General Framework Agreement (GFA) on Renewable Energy Cooperation between India and United Arab Emirates (UAE). The GFA was signed, in New Delhi on 11 February this year during the state visit of Crown Prince of UAE.

The objective of this GFA is to establish the basis for a framework through which extensive projects, investments, other forms of commercial endeavours, cooperation in research and development in renewable and clean energy, and knowledge sharing platforms could be enacted on the basis of mutual benefit, equality and reciprocity between the Parties. The GFA aims at cooperation between India and UAE in the field of new and renewable energy technologies. The GFA will provide opportunity for exploring potential renewable energy projects for investments; Continue cooperating in the International Solar Alliance; exploring avenues of cooperation in research and development in renewables; developing knowledge-sharing mechanisms through

which to build upon the human capital of the Parties; exploring establishing a joint fund between the Parties to facilitate investment: forms of cooperation as mutually agreed by the Parties.

*Source: Press Information Bureau, New Delhi,*

<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=145322>

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## **25. MoU between Indian Space Research Organization and the United Arab Emirates Space Agency, New Delhi, 25 May 2016**

The Union Cabinet, chaired by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi was apprised of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) and the United Arab Emirates Space Agency (UAESA) for cooperation in the exploration and user of outer space for peaceful purposes.

The MoU would result in setting up a Joint Working Group with members from ISRO and UAESA, which will further work out the plan of action including the time-frame and the means of implementing this MoU.

### **Background:**

Promoting space cooperation between India and UAE was highlighted during the visit of Prime Minister of India to UAE in August 2015 and also at the 11th meeting of India-UAE Joint Commission for Economic and Technical Cooperation held at New Delhi in September 2015. Subsequently, a delegation from UAESA visited ISRO technical facilities on 16 September 2015 and discussed on the avenues of building space cooperation including signing of a MoU. Accordingly, ISRO and UAESA, considering their mutual interest in expanding the applications of space technology for peaceful purposes signed a MoU in New Delhi on 11 February 2016.

*Source: Press Information Bureau, New Delhi,*

<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=145638>

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## **k. Multilateral Issue**

### **26. Transcript of Media Briefing by Secretary (ER) on Vice President's forthcoming visit to Morocco and Tunisia, New Delhi, 26 May 2016**

**Vikas Swarup, Official Spokesperson:** Good evening friends and welcome to the weekly press briefing. Before that we have a special press briefing for you on Vice President's forthcoming visits to Morocco and Tunisia.

To brief you on these two very important visits, I have with me, Secretary Economic Relations, Amar Sinha and Satbir Singh, who is Joint Secretary West Asia and North Africa and we are expecting Anshuman Gaur, the OSD to the Vice President to join us shortly.

Secretary ER will give you a broad opening statement which would set the tone for you to understand these two visits and after that he will be open to taking questions on the specific visits by the VP to these two countries. With that the floor is Secretary ER's.



**Amar Sinha, Secretary Economic Relations:** Good afternoon. Welcome to our weekly briefing. Today we are here to announce that Vice President Hamid Ansari and his wife Salma Ansari along with a delegation which includes MoS, Fertilizer and Chemicals and four Members of Parliament would be visiting both Morocco and Tunisia.

Morocco segment is basically from 30 May to 1 June. On 2 and 3 June he will be in Tunisia. As you would notice, we have chosen these two because these two are great examples of democracy which have adjusted to post Arab spring situation in the region and have been close partners historically for India.

This is the time for Africa, and he will set the ball rolling. A series of visits have been planned and this is the first follow up of the high level India-Africa summit that we had held last October, where the King of Morocco himself had come for a week and Tunisia was represented by a Minister.

I need not go into the history, which we can give you as written text. This is also the 50th year anniversary, since we recognized independence of Morocco in 1956. The visit is happening after a long time i.e. 17 years now. Prime Minister had visited in 1999. At the level of Vice President, it's happening after 50 years.

So there is great excitement. The feedback that we have got from these countries is that they are really looking forward to it. Both these countries are extremely important in the context of the regional developments, what is happening in terrorism - so these are our key partners.

Both these countries are key partners in our food security because as you know that there is tremendous dependence on phosphoric fertilizers in India and in both these countries we have investments from private sector. In Morocco, its Chambal Fertilizers and Tata Chemicals which has a plant of half a million tonnes, which we buy-back the phosphoric acid here. And similarly, in Tunisia we have Gujarat Fertilizer and Coromandal Fertilizers which have invested jointly and there are some other investments also. Our car and truck manufacturers are also looking at it. This is a very prospective market.

Among the issues that we will be discussing besides regional issues, is how to strengthen our outreach to Africa generally. Also Morocco wants to pose itself as a gateway to francophone Africa that is one of the key issues why Vice President decided to go there.

Vice President also had, if I am not mistaken, served in Morocco. In 1965-66 he had served there as a diplomat. In terms of other issues we would be discussing Terrorism, UN Security Council expansion on which Morocco supports India's candidature.

For deepening our investment and trade relations with Morocco, we have substantial trade of over a billion dollars in favour of Morocco, basically because we import a lot of fertilizer from there.

With Tunisia, it is slightly less, but there is scope of increasing. Tunisia is also looking at India's expertise in Gas & Oil field sector. We have formed a joint venture in 2007. They have been, sort of pressing us, to get the minister of Petroleum and Gas there, and we should perhaps do a follow up sometime.

In terms of the elements of programme in both these countries, the host would be the Prime Minister or the Head of the Government.

In Morocco, it will be the Head of Government and in Tunisia it's the Prime Minister. There would be meetings with the King in Morocco and with the President in Tunisia. He will be meeting the intellectuals, the Imams, and addressing the diplomatic community at Tunisian Institute of Strategic Studies. He will talk to them about India and how India looks at the world and India's position in the 21st century.

We are of course looking at a number of MoUs to be signed which will focus on capacity building and sharing of India's expertise in various areas in which they look up to India.

We are also looking at some cultural exchanges because as you know that Indian culture, particularly the film industry has a tremendous draw in Morocco. If I am not mistaken, only recently one of the movie stars has just come back after shooting one of their movies in Morocco. So Morocco is particularly developing as a destination for Indian film industry, so they are also very keen to work on this.

And of course, we are also looking at MoUs in Information Technology, Education, and Communication Technology. Tunisia, interestingly is also interested to learn from the Indian handicraft sector. How to revive their own handicraft sector as they wish to do that.

Between these two countries, Morocco has been completely insulated from what happened in the region in terms of ISIS influence and radicalization.

Tunisia has unfortunately, due to its geography has suffered major attacks. As a mark of solidarity we are going to the Bardo museum also, which was under attack last year, if you remember.

He would be visiting some historical sites like Carthage which actually links it to the old. Actually Tunisians say that the Carthaginian empire was the counter point of Roman empire.

So there will be a mix of history, culture and of course building on our contemporary relationship as we have laid out in the action plan. I will stop here. If you have questions, I will be happy to take them.

**Vikas Swarup, Official Spokesperson:** Good, if there are no more questions on Vice President's visit, then this particular press briefing comes to a close.

Thank you. (Concludes)

*Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, [http://mea.gov.in/media-briefings.htm?dtl/26851/Transcript of Media Briefing by Secretary ER on Vice President s forthcoming visit to Morocco and Tunisia May 26 2016](http://mea.gov.in/media-briefings.htm?dtl/26851/Transcript+of+Media+Briefing+by+Secretary+ER+on+Vice+President+s+forthcoming+visit+to+Morocco+and+Tunisia+May+26+2016)*

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1 Crore = 10 million. Lakh = 100,000

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