

INDIA SPEAKS

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BILATERAL ISSUES

a. IRAQ

1. Pradeep Singh Rajpurohit appointed as the next Ambassador of India to the Republic of Iraq, New Delhi, 31 January 2017

Dr. Pradeep Singh Rajpurohit (IFS: 2004), has been appointed as the next Ambassador of India to the Republic of Iraq. He is expected to take up the assignment shortly.

Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, [http://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/27972/Pradeep Singh Rajpurohit appointed as the next Ambassador of India to the Republic of Iraq](http://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/27972/Pradeep_Singh_Rajpurohit_appointed_as_the_next_Ambassador_of_India_to_the_Republic_of_Iraq)

b. JORDAN

2. India's US\$ Two Million Cash Assistance for Humanitarian to the Government of Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, Amman, 3 January 2017

Shubhdarshini Tripathi, Ambassador of India to Jordan has handed over a cheque of US\$ 2 Million (US Dollars Two Million Only) from Government of India as India's cash grant to the Government of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan for humanitarian assistance to H.E. Imad N. Fakhoury, the Minister of Planning and International Cooperation of the Government of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan at a function held at the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation in Amman on 28 December 2016. The Minister of Planning and International Cooperation conveyed his deep appreciation to the Government of India for the cash assistance to the Government of Jordan. He expressed his gratitude for India's contribution in Jordan's capacity building and that he looked forward to further strengthening of our bilateral relations.

Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, [http://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/28006/Indias US Two Million Cash Assistance for Humanitarian to the Government of Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan](http://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/28006/Indias_US_Two_Million_Cash_Assistance_for_Humanitarian_to_the_Government_of_Hashemite_Kingdom_of_Jordan)

c. KUWAIT

3. Government of India extended the date for registration as OCI card holders, Kuwait, 5 January 2017

The Government of India has extended the date for registration as OCI card holders by erstwhile PIO cardholders till 30 June 2017. The conversion of PIO cards into OCI cards will be done free of charge for applications which are submitted till 30 June 2017.

2. All concerned in Kuwait may please take advantage of the extended dateline.

Source: Embassy of India, Kuwait, <http://www.indembkwt.org/DispNews.aspx?ID=1027>

4. Indian Embassy celebrated 68th Republic Day of India, Kuwait, 26 January 2017

The 68th Republic Day of India was celebrated with traditional enthusiasm and patriotic fervour in Kuwait at the Embassy premises by unfurling of the National tri- colour Flag by Ambassador Sunil Jain. More than 4,000 Indian nationals participated with great joy and enthusiasm.

After singing of National Anthem and the reading out the message of the Hon'ble Rashtrapatiiji by Ambassador, several patriotic songs were sung on this joyous occasion. The performances of the Bohra Band held everyone spellbound. The highlight of the event was participation by various Indian Schools who took part in the event with great enthusiasm. There was an Open House grand reception for all, serving hot chhole & bhature, steaming hot idlis with sambar, gulab jamun, tea and juice. Some photos of the events are attached.

Kuwait.

Source: Embassy of India, Kuwait, <http://www.indembkwt.org/DispNews.aspx?ID=1041>

d. LEBANON

5. Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) Celebrations With Indian Community In Lebanon, Beirut, 3 January 2017

The 14th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) Convention is scheduled to be held in Bengaluru, India from 7-9 January 2017. The PBD commemorates the return of the Father of the Nation Mahatma Gandhi to India as a Pravasi on 9 January 1915. Information about participation in PBD in Bengaluru is available on the Embassy's website (www.indianembassybeirut.org)

2. Embassy of India in Beirut will celebrate Pravasi Bharatiya Divas on Monday, 9 January 2017 at 6.00 PM at the Embassy premises at Ibrahim Abed El Aal Street, Ras Beirut.

3. Highlights of the 14th PBD Convention will be presented at the event at the Embassy. Ambassador-designate of India will also address the gathering. Refreshments will be served.

4. All Indian nationals and persons of Indian origin in Lebanon are cordially invited. A confirmation of participation may please be sent by E- mail (info.beirut@mea.gov.in).

Source: Embassy of India, Beirut, <http://indianembassybeirut.org/notice/display/105/13>

e. OMAN

6. Press Release: The Embassy of India in Muscat celebrated the 14th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas, Muscat, 12 January 2017

The Embassy of India in Muscat celebrated the 14th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas on 11 January 2017 at the Embassy, which was attended by over 300 NRIs and PIOs, including Pravasi Bharatiya

Samman Awardees from Oman, Businessmen, Academics, Cultural personalities, media persons and representatives of Indian Social Club Oman and its various Linguistic Wings. The celebration began with rendition of National Anthem followed by screening of a film produced by Ministry of External Affairs of India on the theme of 'redefining the engagement of the Government of India with Indian diaspora'. Excerpts of Prime Minister's inaugural address at the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Convention 2017, on 8 January 2017, were screened, conveying key aspects of the Government of India's commitment to the welfare of Indian diaspora as enunciated by PM.

Ambassador made a power point presentation on key elements and outcomes of the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Convention 2017. He underlined that the Government has revised the concept of PBD Convention to make the participation of NRIs and PIOs and deliberations at the Convention meaningful and result-oriented. Presenting the key outcomes of 13 Plenary Meetings held at the PBD Convention 2017 on various topics, Ambassador stressed that the Government, a staunch believer in accountability, used the Plenary Meetings to present the action taken by it on the recommendations made by the invited experts at the meetings convened by External Affairs Minister in 2015-16 to discuss those topics. Ambassador also outlined the outcome of various other activities and meetings organized at PBD 2017 and emphasized that the Government of India is keen on participation of diaspora in growth and development of India.

It is also keen to deepen its engagement with the young Diaspora to help them know more about their roots and connect with India. Ambassador also explained the mandate of India Development Foundation for Overseas Indians (IDF-OI) and encouraged NRIs and PIOs to adopt projects and contribute to their implementation. He also elaborated on the Government's new initiatives for the benefit of the Diaspora. He presented to the audience the recent initiatives taken by the Embassy to enhance access and connect with the community. He appreciated the efforts made by social workers and volunteers towards the welfare of the Indian community in Oman and mentioned the MigCall App, which was launched by Embassy in Oman in 2015 to connect Indian migrants in distress in Oman and other GCC countries. Ambassador then invited inputs and suggestions from the community, enabling the Embassy to deliver its services efficiently and promptly. He assured the community that the Embassy, as always, will continue to work with the community and the Government of Oman to promote the welfare of the Indian community in Oman.

Source: Embassy of India, Muscat,

<http://www.indemb-oman.org/inner.aspx?type=AllPressRelease&id=0>

7. Government of India has announced changes in the existing visa rules, Muscat, 5 January 2017

With a view to facilitate and encourage foreign nationals including Omanis, to visit India for Tourism, Business and other purposes, Government of India has announced changes in the existing visa rules in order to liberalize, simplify and rationalize the visa regime. The

Government has modified the existing 'e-Tourist Visa', Scheme. The 'e-Visa' will now be issued for the specific purpose of the visit viz. 'e-Tourist Visa', 'e-Business Visa', 'e-Medical Visa'. While, 'e-Tourist Visa' will be issued for visits aimed at recreation, sight-seeing, casual visits and to attend Yoga programmes, 'e-Business Visa' will be issued for visits aimed at enhancing business activities in India, including establishing business ventures, purchase/sell commercial products, attending technical meetings, discussions, board meetings, recruitment of manpower etc. Similarly, 'e-Medical Visa' will be issued for medical treatment in India.

The window for issuing visas under 'e-Visa' has also been increased from 30 days to 120 days, which means that the applicant can travel to India within 120 days of the issue of 'e-Visa'. Similarly, the duration of stay in India under 'e-Visa' has also been increased from existing 30 days to 60 days. In case of 'e-Medical Visa', extension can be granted for stay up to 6 months on case to case basis by the Foreigners Regional Registration Officer (FRRO) concerned. While under 'e-Tourist Visa' and 'e-Business Visa', foreign nationals will now be allowed to undertake two visits as against the current provision of single visit, the applicants availing 'e-Medical Visa' will be issued Triple Entry Visas enabling them to visit India three times on the same visa. 'e-Visa', except for 'e-Medical Visa', will be non-extendable and non-convertible. The Government has also permitted 'e-Visa' holders to enter India through 5 major ports of India viz. Mumbai, Cochin, Goa, Chennai and Bangalore in order to tap the potential of cruise tourism to India; They are also allowed to India through 16 airports of India only viz. Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Thiruvananthapuram, Kochi, Goa, Ahmadabad, Amritsar, Gaya, Jaipur, Lucknow, Thiruchirapalli and Varanasi.

With a view to promote visit of Omanis for tourism and business purposes, the Government has also decided to grant Multiple Entry Tourist and Business Visas valid for a period of 5 years. Each visit under Tourist Visa, however, shall not exceed 90 days. Tourist Visa holder will also not be required to register himself/herself. Similarly, Multi-entry business visas will also be valid for 5 years with continuous stay during each visit not to exceed 180 days. The requirement of registration of Business Visa holders has also been done away with. In 2016, the Embassy of India in Muscat issued over 72 thousand Tourist Visas and over 900 Business Visas.

In order to further facilitate Omani patients visiting India for medical treatment, Government has decided to open separate counters at Immigration points for speedy and smooth clearance of Medical Visa holders, initially at 6 International Airports viz. Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Bengaluru and Hyderabad. Facilitation desks will also be available at these airports, which would have Arabic as well as Russian translators to help patients overcome the language barrier. This facility will be particularly useful for people of Oman visiting India for medical treatment. It may be noted that BLS Oman, which is responsible for accepting visa applications, has already opened a separate counter at their Muscat Centre to facilitate Medical Visa applicants. In 2016, a total of 11612 Medical Visas and 8491 Medical Attendant visas were issued by the Embassy.

Medical Attendants accompanying patients going to India for medical treatment are granted Medical Attendant Visa under the existing procedure.

Source: Embassy of India, Muscat,

<http://www.indemb-oman.org/inner.aspx?type=AllPressRelease&id=0>

f. QATAR

8. Visit of Indian Coast Guard Ship Samudra Pavak to Qatar, Doha, 24 January 2017

In the framework of the deep-rooted friendly ties and multi-faceted and growing cooperation between India and the State of Qatar, Indian Coast Guard Ship (ICGS) Samudra Pavak will be visiting Hamad Port from 24-28 January, 2017 in conjunction with the celebrations of India's 68th Republic Day (26 January, 2017). Hamad Port is the first port of call by ICGS Samudra Pavak during her upcoming overseas deployment to the Gulf region covering Qatar, Saudi Arabia, UAE and Oman.

ICGS Samudra Pavak, the third of the Pollution Control Vessel (PCV) series of the Indian Coast Guard, was indigenously designed and built by M/s ABG Ship Yard Pvt. Ltd and commissioned on 14 January, 2016. Samudra Pavak in Hindi means "Purifier of the Seas".

ICGS Samudra Pavak has 15 officers and 99 other personnel under the Command of Deputy Inspector General Satish Kumar, Tatraksha Medal, and is based at Porbandar under the administrative and operational control of the Commander, Headquarters, Coast Guard Region (NW) Gandhinagar.

The 94 meters PCV is equipped with state of the art technology which includes Integrated Platform Management System (IPMS), Dynamic Positioning System (DP System), Power Management System (PMS), External Fire Fighting System (EFF) and Pollution Control Equipment for undertaking Coast Guard charter specific duties. As a Specialized Marine Pollution Control vessel, the PCV is also equipped with pollution response and control equipment which includes "Containment Equipment" like High Sprint Booms and River Booms, "Recovery Equipment" like skimmers and Side Sweeping Arms, "Storage Devices" like ORO tanks (Capacity 500 KL) and Inflatable Barges (Capacity 150 KL) and "Spraying Equipment" like Retractable Spill Spray System and Aerial Spray System (TC-3). The ship is capable of carrying and operating helicopters from her deck.

ICGS Samudra Pavak has been extensively deployed along the northwest maritime frontier to safeguard the maritime interests of India. The ship has been tasked for EEZ surveillance, Search and Rescue, Pollution Response and such other duties as penned in the Coast Guard charter.

The visit of ICGS Samudra Pavak is the third visit by an Indian Coast Guard Ship to Qatar in the last three years; ICGS Vijit and ICGS Sankalp had made friendly voyages to Doha port in December 2014 and January 2016, respectively. The visit of ICGS Samudra Pavak during the

celebrations of India's 68th Republic Day will further strengthen the time-tested friendship between India and Qatar, and enhance maritime cooperation between the two countries.

Source: Embassy of India, Muscat,

http://www.indianembassyqatar.gov.in/pages/press_release_detail.php?id=191&page=1

g. SAUDI ARABIA

9. H. E. Ahmad Javed, Ambassador of India to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia met Tamim Majed Al Dosary, Deputy Minister for Consular Affairs in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Riyadh, 16 January 2017

H. E. Ahmad Javed, Ambassador of India to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia met Tamim Majed Al Dosary, Deputy Minister for Consular Affairs in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Riyadh today (16.01.2017).

During the meeting, they exchanged cordial talks on a number of issues of mutual interest, with special emphasis on ensuring the welfare of Indian community members in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and speeding up of grievances redressal mechanism.

Source: Embassy of India, Doha

<http://www.indianembassy.org.sa/Content.aspx?ID=790&PID=691>

10. H. E. Ahmad Javed, Ambassador of India to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia met Dr. Esam A. Alwagait, Deputy Minister for Technical Affairs in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Riyadh, 15 January 2017

During the meeting, they exchanged cordial talks on a number of issues of mutual interest, with special emphasis on further expanding the engagements in the technical and IT fields between the reputed institutes of the two countries. Ambassador also invited Dr. Al-Waqeet to visit the IT centres of repute in India.

Source: Embassy of India, Riyadh,

<http://www.indianembassy.org.sa/Content.aspx?ID=790&PID=691>

h. SYRIA

11. Syrian Actor Director awarded in DIFF, 4 January 2017

Renowned Syrian actor director Sulaf Fawakherji was awarded "Best Women Director – Arab Cinema" Award at the 5th Delhi International Film Festival (3-9 December, 2016) for her film "Cherry Letters". The Film was displayed at the opening ceremony and was much liked.

Source: Embassy of India, Damascus, <http://eoi.gov.in/damascus/?5700?000>

12. Syrian team ranks second at World Robot Olympiad in India, 4 January 2017

The Syrian "Build It" team won the second position in the World Robot Olympiad competition (New Delhi, 25-27 November, 2016). The theme of the project was based on recycling demolished buildings using robots, which would be useful for the post-war reconstruction process in Syria. The Syrian participation in the Olympiad included nine teams representing different institutions. Some 440 teams from more than 55 countries took part in the Olympiad competitions.

Source: Embassy of India, Damascus, <http://eoi.gov.in/damascus/?5699?000>

i. UAE

13. Press Release on the issue of 41 Sailors, Dubai, 9 January 2017

The Consulate has seen the tweet of the EAM regarding the plight of 41 Sailors on four vessels, anchored at Ajman port.

The matter has been taken up with the UAE authorities, including the port authorities at Sharjah and Ajman. The Consulate had also established contact with the captains of 2 vessels. They have confirmed that sufficient stock of fuel, food and water is available, which could last for a couple of weeks. The crew has requested for pending salaries and release from duty.

The Consulate had also spoken to the sponsor and sought his assistance for settlement of all issues with the crew on priority basis. It is hoped that an amicable solution will be forthcoming at the earliest, with the cooperation of all parties involved, including the local authorities. The Consulate will continue to pursue the matter with all relevant parties in order to arrive at an amicable settlement, keeping in view the best interest of the Indian sailors.

Source: Consulate General of India, Dubai, <http://www.cgidubai.org/press-release-on-the-issue-of-41-sailors/>

14. India-UAE Strategic Dialogue, New Delhi 20 January 2017

Pursuant to the decision to elevate their relations to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership during the exchange of the visits at the highest level between India and United Arab Emirates in August 2015 and February 2016, the two sides held the first meeting of Strategic Dialogue between the two Foreign Offices on 20 January 2017 in New Delhi. The meeting was co-chaired by M J Akbar, MOS for External Affairs and Dr. Anwar Gargash, MOS in Ministry of Foreign Affairs of UAE. The two sides were represented by strong delegations drawn from a number of relevant Ministries and Departments.

During the meeting, the two sides discussed a number of issues ranging from cooperation in the areas of trade & investments to expanding the bilateral cooperation to new areas under the strategic partnership, inter alia in the areas of energy security & renewable energy, defence & security, electronics & information technology and space.

The meeting provided a timely opportunity to prepare for the forthcoming State visit of the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi as the Chief Guest at the Republic Day celebrations, 2017. The two sides agreed on a number of new initiatives to further strengthen the bilateral cooperation and on signing of fresh instruments of cooperation.

Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, http://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/27959/IndiaUAE_Strategic_Dialogue_New_Delhi_January_20_2017

15. State visit of Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi to India as the Chief Guest for the Republic Day 2017, New Delhi, 19 January 2017

His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces of United Arab Emirates is visiting India as the Chief

Guest for the 2017-Republic Day celebrations from 24-26 January 2017. He will be accompanied by a high-level delegation, including Ministers, senior officials and captains of industry.

During the visit, the visiting dignitary would call on Rashtrapati Pranab Mukherjee and Vice President Mohammad Hamid Ansari and would hold discussions with Prime Minister Narendra Modi on bilateral, regional and global issues of common interest.

This is the second visit of the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi to India since February 2016. Following the landmark visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to UAE in August 2015, the two countries have agreed to elevate the mutually beneficial relationship to a comprehensive strategic partnership.

India and UAE enjoy warm, close and multi-faceted relations underpinned by cultural, religious and economic linkages. The two countries have been amongst each other's top trading partners with a well-balanced bilateral trade of about US\$ 50 billion in 2015-16. UAE is among the top investors in India in terms of foreign direct investments. It contributes significantly to India's energy security and is the fifth largest supplier of crude oil to India in 2015-16.

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.

Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, [http://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/27956/State visit of Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi to India as the Chief Guest for the Republic Day 2017 2426 January 2017](http://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/27956/State%20visit%20of%20Crown%20Prince%20of%20Abu%20Dhabi%20to%20India%20as%20the%20Chief%20Guest%20for%20the%20Republic%20Day%202017%202426%20January%202017)

16. Press Statement by Prime Minister during the State visit of Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi to India, New Delhi, 25 January 2017

Your Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan,
Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi,
Friends from the Media,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome to India a dear friend, His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan. We are delighted that His Highness has come back to India on his second State visit. And, with his participation as our honoured Chief Guest in the Republic Day Celebrations tomorrow this visit is particularly special. Your Highness, I warmly recall our earlier meetings in August 2015, and in February last year. Our discussions were wide ranging covering the entire spectrum of our bilateral engagement. Personally, I benefitted immensely from your perspective of our partnership, your appreciation of our region and your world view. Your Highness, under your leadership, we have been successful in creating new synergies in our ties. We have shaped an ambitious roadmap of engagement to make our comprehensive strategic partnership purposeful and action oriented. The agreement that was exchanged just now has institutionalized this understanding.

Friends,

UAE is one of our most valued partners and a close friend in an important region of the world. I have just concluded very fruitful and productive discussions with His Highness. We particularly focused on implementation of various decisions taken during our last two meetings. We agreed to sustain the momentum of our relations in key areas, including energy and investments.

Friends,

We regard UAE as an important partner in India's growth story. I particularly welcome UAE's interest in investing in India's infrastructure sector. We are working to connect the institutional investors in UAE with our National Investment and Infrastructure Fund. I also shared with His Highness the interest of Indian companies to be a partner in infrastructure projects for the World EXPO 2020 in Dubai. UAE can benefit by linking with our growth in manufacturing and services. We can jointly tap abundant opportunities in our initiatives aimed at building digital economy, human capital and smart urbanization in India. We are also encouraging and facilitating business and industry of both countries to increase the quality and quantum bilateral trade. The agreement on trade remedies signed today would strengthen our trade partnership further. Our energy partnership, is an important bridge in our linkages. It contributes to our energy security. His Highness and I discussed ways to transform our energy ties in a strategic direction through specific projects and proposals. In this regard, long-term supply contracts and establishment of joint ventures in the energy sector can be beneficial avenues.

Friends,

Security and defence cooperation have added growing new dimensions to our relationship. We have agreed to expand our useful cooperation in the field of defence to new areas including in the maritime domain. The MoU on Defence Cooperation, signed earlier today, will help steer our defence engagements in the right direction. We also feel that our growing engagement in countering violence and extremism is necessary for securing our societies.

Friends,

His Highness and I believe that our closer ties are of importance, not just to both our countries. They are also of significance to the entire neighbourhood. Our convergence can help stabilize the region. And, our economic partnership can be a source of regional and global prosperity. We exchanged views on developments in West Asia and the Gulf, where both countries have a shared interest in peace and stability. We also discussed developments in our region, including Afghanistan. Our shared concern on growing threat from radicalism and terrorism to the safety and security of our people is shaping our cooperation in this space.

Friends,

UAE is home to around 2.6 million Indians. Their contributions are deeply valued both in India and in UAE. I expressed gratitude to His Highness for looking after the welfare of Indian

nationals in UAE. I also thanked His Highness for allotting land for a temple for the Indian diaspora in Abu Dhabi.

Friends,

The success of our partnership owes greatly to the personal interest taken by His Highness Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of UAE and His Highness Sheikh Mohammed. Moving forward, our cooperation stands poised for a major take off. I am confident, Your Highness, that your visit will build on the strong gains and understanding of our previous interactions. And, shape its future framework marked by depth, drive and diversification of our partnership. In closing, I would like to thank His Highness for accepting my invitation to visit India. I wish him and all the delegation members a very pleasant stay in India.

Thank you.

Thank you very much.

Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, http://www.mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/27968/Press_Statement_by_Prime_Minister_during_the_State_visit_of_Crown_Prince_of_Abu_Dhabi_to_India_January_25_2017

17. India - UAE Joint Statement during State visit of Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi to India, New Delhi, 26 January 2017

1. The State Visit of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces to India from 24-26 January 2017 as the honoured Chief Guest at India's 68th Republic Day celebrations marked a momentous occasion in the warm and friendly relations between India and the UAE.
2. This was the second successive State Visit by Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed to India since February 2016, clearly reflecting the warmth and goodwill he and the people of UAE have for India and its people.
3. The strong bonds of time-tested friendship between India and UAE have found clear expression in the series of high-level bilateral visits between the two countries in the past two years.
4. During the visit, Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed was accompanied by a high-level delegation comprising cabinet Ministers, senior officials and business leaders. He received a ceremonial welcome in the forecourt of Rashtrapati Bhavan on 25 January. President Pranab Mukherjee hosted a banquet dinner in honour of the Crown Prince which was preceded by official discussions. Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed met with Vice-President Mohammed Hamid Ansari and had delegation-level discussions with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who also hosted a banquet lunch in honour of the visiting dignitary.
5. This visit afforded a timely opportunity to both Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed and Prime Minister Narendra Modi to further build upon their close and regular consultations which began in August 2015. The two leaders expressed satisfaction at the progress made in bilateral ties since Prime Minister Modi's August 2015 visit to UAE and reiterated their common resolve to further intensifying and strengthening the constructive and wide-ranging India-UAE bilateral engagement.

6. During their productive and fruitful discussions on bilateral, regional and multilateral issues of common interest, the two leaders noted that the mutually beneficial ties between the two countries were driven by the aspirations of their two peoples and the shared ideals on which their two nations are based. They expressed satisfaction that these ties have been maturing into a robust relationship across a broad spectrum of political, economic, trade and investment, energy, education, culture, defence and security spheres.
7. The two sides reaffirmed their deep commitment to building a comprehensive strategic partnership, as agreed upon during the landmark visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to the UAE in August 2015 and reiterated during the last visit of Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed to India in February 2016, in order to elevate their multifaceted ties to an even higher and qualitatively new level based on mutual understanding and confidence in each other with the primary aim to ensure peace and prosperity of their two peoples. In this context, they welcomed the signing of the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership Agreement.

Global Issues and Strategic Dialogue

8. The two leaders resolved to harness the shared strengths and complementarities to expand the India-UAE partnership for the benefit of their countries, for peace, stability and prosperity in their region, and for the betterment of the world. Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed stated that the UAE looks forward to a stable and prosperous India playing an increasingly important role in regional and global affairs.
9. The two leaders agreed to support each other's candidatures and campaigns at the United Nations. They took note of the growing call amongst the United Nations Member States for an early and comprehensive reform of the UN Security Council, including expansion in both categories of membership, to make it more representative of contemporary world realities. Prime Minister Modi thanked Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed for the consistent support expressed by the UAE for India's candidature for permanent membership in a reformed and expanded UN Security Council.
10. Outlining the urgent need for a rule-based, just and equitable system of regional and international governance, the two sides agreed to further strengthen dialogue and consultations on major bilateral, regional, and international matters of mutual concern. In this context, the two leaders expressed satisfaction that the first round of the India-UAE policy planning Strategic Dialogue between the Indian Ministry of External Affairs and the UAE Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as announced in the February 2016 visit, was held on 20 January 2017 in New Delhi.

Regional Security and Countering International Terrorism

11. The two leaders acknowledged the common threat posed by terrorism to peace and security. They reiterated their strong condemnation of and resolute opposition to terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, wherever committed and by whomever, and declared that there could be no justification for terrorism anywhere.
12. The two sides condemned efforts, including by States, to use religion to justify, sustain and sponsor terrorism against other countries. 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'.
13. The two leaders articulated their clear and unequivocal resolve to cooperate on counter-terrorism by adopting a policy of zero tolerance towards the menace of terrorism. Satisfied at

the growing bilateral collaboration on counterterrorism, information sharing and capacity-building, they expressed confidence that these efforts would contribute to regional and global peace and security.

14. The two sides agreed to coordinate efforts to counter radicalization and misuse of religion by groups and countries for inciting hatred and perpetrating acts of terrorism. They emphasized the need to facilitate regular exchanges of religious scholars and intellectuals and to organize conferences and seminars to promote the values of peace, tolerance, inclusiveness and welfare that are inherent in all religions.
15. Both leaders emphasized the importance of promoting a culture of inclusiveness, openness and tolerance within and among societies and agreed to work together closely to confront the global ills of extremism, terrorism and religious intolerance. They reiterated that the Indian and the UAE experiences in building inclusive societies should continue to be promoted as effective models in countering extremism and radicalism.
16. Both sides noted the importance of efforts to disrupt terrorist networks, their financing and movement, in accordance with the relevant principles and purposes of the UN Charter and international laws. 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. In this regard, they called for early conclusion of negotiations on the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism in the United Nations.
17. The two leaders expressed their grave concern about the threat posed by terrorism and violent extremism which undermines security and stability. The two leaders agreed that resolute and credible steps must be taken to eliminate safe havens and sanctuaries that provide shelter to terrorists and their activities.
18. The Indian side expressed deep appreciation for the solidarity expressed by the UAE on the terrorist attacks on the Indian Air Force base in Pathankot in January 2016 and on the Army headquarters in Uri in September 2016.
19. The two leaders strongly condemned the terrorist attacks in Kabul and Kandahar on 10 January 2017, and underscored the need to bring the perpetrators of these dastardly and cowardly acts to justice. Prime Minister Modi conveyed his heartfelt condolences on the loss of lives of the UAE and Afghan nationals in these attacks. He wished speedy recovery to the UAE diplomats injured in the attacks.

Security, Defence and Space cooperation

20. Prime Minister Modi appreciated the support extended by UAE security agencies on specific issues of security concern to India. The two leaders reiterated that the ongoing close cooperation on a range of security issues, particularly on counter-terrorism, maritime security and cyber-security remained a key pillar of the bilateral strategic partnership.
21. Acknowledging the importance of the ongoing bilateral security cooperation for ensuring a conducive and peaceful environment for the progress and development of the two countries, the two sides agreed to further enhance cooperation in the fields of law enforcement, anti-money laundering, smuggling of fake currency, drug trafficking, human trafficking, illegal migration and other transnational organized crimes. In this context, the two leaders described the MOU on cooperation in prevention and combating of human trafficking signed during the visit as an important step forward in developing joint strategies to combat such threats.

22. Expressing serious concerns at the misuse of cyber space as a medium to promote subversive and extremist ideologies, the two leaders acknowledged the importance of the MoU on Technical Cooperation in Cyber Space and Combating Cyber Crime signed during the February 2016 visit of Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed as the cornerstone of the expanding bilateral cooperation in this area. The two leaders expressed happiness on the signing of an MOU on technical development and cooperation in cyber space during the visit. To further deepen cooperation in this area, they agreed to the setting up of joint Research & Development Centres of Excellence.
23. Acknowledging that the agreement on Defence Cooperation renewed in 2014 provided the general framework to strengthen bilateral defence ties, the two leaders agreed to provide further impetus to these relations, including through joint exercises, training of naval, air and land forces, as also in the area of coastal defence and through participation in defence exhibitions etc. They expressed satisfaction at the successful holding of joint military exercises in May-June 2016. The two sides also welcomed the signing of the MOU on the Mutual Protection of Classified Information during the May 2016 visit of Indian Defence Minister to UAE in fulfilment of their commitment articulated in the February 2016 joint statement.
24. The UAE side acknowledged the opportunities offered under the 'Make in India' initiative for joint production of defence equipment in India and also for the procurement of defence material. In this regard, the two sides described the signing of an MOU on Cooperation in the field of Defence Industry during this visit as an important step forward.
25. Expressing satisfaction at the progress achieved in the eighth round of Joint Defence Cooperation Committee talks held in Abu Dhabi in December 2016, the two sides agreed to hold the next meeting of the Joint Defence Cooperation Committee in 2017.
26. The two sides expressed common resolve to bolster cooperation and exchanges on countering piracy in their shared maritime domain in the Gulf and the Indian Ocean regions and to exchange experiences in maritime security, including joint anti-piracy training and exercises. They agreed to establish technical arrangement for white shipping information exchange and to explore cooperation in the field of hydrography. The UAE side expressed interest in the coastal surveillance systems developed by India.
27. Prime Minister Modi thanked the UAE Armed Forces for their participation in the Republic Day parade and expressed admiration for the tireless efforts of the UAE Armed Forces in promoting regional security, peace and stability.

Trade, Investment and Economic Development

28. The two sides described bilateral trade ties as an abiding link between the two countries. The two leaders lauded the current level of economic and trade engagement with both countries being among each other's largest trading partners. Over recent years, both countries, as economic hubs, have become increasingly interconnected and continue to develop a range of synergies in numerous fields.
29. Prime Minister Modi and Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed agreed that the UAE and India must continue to cooperate closely in order to expand mutual trade and economic opportunities, leveraging the strategic bonds that exist between the two countries. In order to develop a medium and long term strategy for increasing bilateral 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 decided to conduct required studies to come up with action plans by June 2017.

These would focus on identification of potential sectors and the impeding tariff and non-tariff barriers, exploring opportunities in services sector and formulating a sector-specific strategy to boost two way trade and investments. In this context, they expressed satisfaction at the signing of an MoU between the Indian Ministry of Commerce and the UAE Ministry of Economy on trade remedial measures to promote cooperation in areas of anti-dumping during the visit.

30. The two sides underlined the importance of the MoU on Indian Rupee and UAE Dirham Bilateral Currency Swap Arrangement between Reserve Bank of India and Central Bank of the United Arab Emirates concluded during the Crown Prince's previous visit in February 2016, as a useful mechanism for trade promotion.
31. It was also noted that the MOUs signed by the Confederation of Indian Industry with the Registration Authority of Abu Dhabi Global Market as also with Global Manufacturing & Industrialization Summit in November 2016 and another on Mutual Cooperation and Technical Assistance between SEBI and Abu Dhabi Global Market Financial Services Regulatory Authority would facilitate joint collaboration on initiatives and efforts to further encourage business developments.
32. The two leaders lauded the work of the UAE-India High Level Task Force on Investments and reiterated the important role it plays in promoting economic and investments cooperation between the two countries.
33. Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed reaffirmed his strong confidence in India's vibrant economy and expressed appreciation for Prime Minister Modi's inspiring vision for the future of the country. Prime Minister Modi apprised His Highness the Crown Prince of progress on a range of key initiatives, including "Start Up India", "Make in India", "Smart City", "Digital India" and "Clean India", highlighting their strong potential to provide Indian economy a positive thrust for a robust and sustained growth.
34. The UAE side reaffirmed its interest in investing in infrastructure development in India, especially in priority areas such as energy, power generation and transmission, defence production, industrial corridors and parks, railways, roads, ports, shipping and logistics. The two leaders welcomed the signing of MoUs on Cooperation in Maritime Transport, on Mutual Recognition of Certificates of Competency of the Seafarers and on Cooperation in the Road Transport and Highways Sector during the visit.
35. The two leaders reviewed the progress in realizing the USD 75 billion target for UAE investments in India's plans for rapid expansion of next generation infrastructure development. PM Modi invited UAE participation in India's National Infrastructure Investment Master Fund as an anchor investor. The two leaders agreed that the Joint Working Group formed under the MOU on the framework for facilitating the participation of UAE Institutional Investors in National Infrastructure Investment Fund should meet regularly to boost investment ties to realize the full potential.
36. Describing the existing Bilateral Investment Treaty of December 2013 a key framework for promotion of investments ties, the two leaders directed their respective Ministries to commence renegotiations on the revised treaty text for early finalization.
37. The two sides agreed to further strengthen their mechanisms for exchange of information in tax matters under the existing Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement.
38. Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed encouraged Indian participation and partnership in Dubai Expo 2020 and also presented to Prime Minister Modi an overview of the UAE's upcoming developmental priorities. The Indian side conveyed the interest of Indian

companies to be a partner in the infrastructure projects being undertaken by the UAE in preparation for the Dubai Expo as well as in UAE's development plans.

Energy and Climate Change

39. Keeping in view the importance of energy security as a key aspect of the strategic partnership, the two leaders expressed satisfaction at the current level of energy sector cooperation, acknowledging UAE as among the largest suppliers of crude oil to India.
40. The two leaders agreed to explore ways to transform the buyer-seller relationship in the energy-sector to one of deeper partnership focusing on investment and joint ventures in petrochemical complexes, and cooperation in joint exploration in India, UAE and in third countries. The two sides also agreed to focus on areas of training and human resources development and cooperation in R&D in the energy sector.
41. The two sides welcomed the signing of the agreement on Oil Storage and Management between Abu Dhabi National Oil Company and the Indian Strategic Petroleum Reserves Limited for the establishment of Strategic Petroleum Reserve in India during the visit.
42. The two leaders agreed to expand their collaboration in the field of renewable energy and in the international negotiations on climate change, under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and agreed to continue their strong support to the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA).
43. The two leaders reviewed the bilateral cooperation between the government agencies, private sector, civil society and academia in the field of climate change. They discussed possible investment opportunities for Masdar in India and potential areas of cooperation based upon the General Framework agreement for Cooperation in Renewable Energy signed in February 2016.
44. Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed reaffirmed support for Prime Minister Modi's initiative on the new International Solar Alliance (ISA). Prime Minister Modi thanked the Crown Prince for UAE's support during the ISA Steering Committee Meetings. They acknowledged the importance of ensuring synergies between the ISA and IRENA.

Space, Electronics & IT

45. Underlining the ongoing space cooperation, the two sides noted that the MOU on cooperation in the exploration and uses of outer space for peaceful purposes signed between ISRO and United Arab Emirates Space Agency in February 2016 established a practical framework for cooperation in the areas of space science, technology and applications including remote sensing; satellite communication and satellite based navigation. The two leaders agreed that the joint working group established under the ambit of this MOU would meet during 2017 to explore a long-term plan to identify and implement projects of mutual interest. Prime Minister Modi expressed happiness at the UAE's plan to launch a Mars Mission in 2021.
46. The Indian side thanked the UAE side for its interest in the proposal for establishing a semiconductor fabrication facility in India. The two sides agreed to further business-to-business cooperation in Information Technology, Information Technology Enabled Services and Electronics System Design and Manufacturing.

Health and Food Security

47. Both sides agreed to pursue opportunities in the health care industry, including in pharmaceuticals and biotechnology sectors and resolved to urge their private sectors to explore early participation in these areas.
48. Prime Minister Modi and Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed agreed that ensuring food security remains an area of high priority for the two sides. The Indian side welcomed proposal from the UAE side for establishing food security parks, including through creation of high quality food processing infrastructure, integrated cold chain, value addition and preserving technology, packaging of food products and marketing.

People and Skill development

49. The two leaders underlined the shared values of respect for diversity, plurality and multiculturalism cherished by the two countries which are exemplified by the vibrant linkages between their peoples. They described these connections as a unique asset for both countries.
50. Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed conveyed his deep appreciation for the role and contribution played by the Indian community in the UAE to the progress and development of their host country, noting that Indian citizens in the UAE are highly respected for their peaceful nature and hard-working ethics. Prime Minister Modi thanked the UAE leadership for ensuring the continued welfare of the Indian community and for the process of labour reforms initiated by the UAE Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratization.
51. The two sides welcomed the holding of the second meeting of the Joint Committee on Consular Affairs in Abu Dhabi in December 2016 which allowed fruitful discussions on labour and consular matters. They noted that the MOU on the Mutual Exemption of Visas for holders of Diplomatic, Special and Official Passports of the two countries signed during this visit would facilitate travel.
52. The two sides agreed to hold the next Meeting of India-UAE Joint Committee on Manpower Issues in the first half of 2017 and to work towards early conclusion of a revised MoU on labour and manpower.
53. Emphasizing the need for cooperation in the skill development area as key to optimal utilization of human resources, the two sides took note of the first meeting of the Joint Working Group formed under the aegis of the MOU for Cooperation in Skill Development and Recognition of Qualifications in April 2016 at New Delhi.
54. Describing Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises sector as an emerging area of cooperation to promote joint projects, R&D and related activities, the two leaders expressed satisfaction at the signing of an MOU during the visit.

Civil Aviation, Tourism, Culture and Press

55. The two leaders underlined that over 1,050 flights per week between India and UAE are indicative of vibrant people to people linkages. Recognizing the need to further expand and develop cooperation in the civil aviation sector, the two sides agreed to convene consultations between their respective civil aviation authorities in the first half of 2017 to discuss key areas of mutual interest.
56. Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed welcomed Prime Minister Modi's proposal to develop Cruise tourism between the two countries. The two sides agreed to explore the feasibility on the cruise routes between India and UAE and to prepare an action plan and detailed road map for the development of cruise shipping.

57. Prime Minister Modi welcomed UAE's contributions and participation in Kochi Muziris Biennale in Kerala in 2016, and for making the event such a grand success. The two sides reviewed areas of cooperation under the 2016-18 Cultural Exchange Programme signed during the February 2016 visit of Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed.
58. They agreed to continue to promote cooperation in the Media, radio, film and television. In this context, they noted that the MoU for cooperation in programme exchange between Prasar Bharati of India and Emirates News Agency (WAM) of the UAE would further strengthen collaboration in the field of broadcasting and exchange of programmes, news and best practices.

International and Regional Cooperation

59. The two leaders noted that the UAE and India share a range of common interests and positions on bilateral, regional and international issues, and must continue to strengthen their cooperation through a range of international fora. In particular, both leaders highlighted a strong desire to continue their cooperation in the framework of the Indian Ocean Rim Association and other important regional bodies.
60. They also reiterated their common desire to work together in the spirit of South-South cooperation in sub-Saharan Africa, particularly through capacity-building, grants and loans, collaboration in trade and technology, and joint projects aimed at supporting the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals.

Conclusion

61. His Highness the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi thanked President Pranab Mukherjee, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the people of India for the distinguished honour extended to him as the Chief Guest at the Republic Day celebrations. He also expressed his sincere appreciation for the warm welcome and kind hospitality extended to him and his delegation. He further invited the President and the Prime Minister of India to visit the UAE at mutually convenient time.
62. This visit of His Highness the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi to India provided the two sides another useful opportunity to consolidate the gains made in building a comprehensive strategic partnership between India and the UAE.

Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, http://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/27969/India_UAE_Joint_Statement_during_State_visit_of_Crown_Prince_of_Abu_Dhabi_to_India_January_2426_2017

19. List of Agreements/MOUs exchanged during the State visit of Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi to India, New Delhi, 25 January 2017

S. No.	Name of Agreement/MoU	Details
1.	Agreement on Comprehensive Strategic Partnership between the Republic of India and the UAE	This is a general framework agreement which highlights the areas of bilateral cooperation identified under the comprehensive strategic partnership as agreed upon in the high level joint statements issued in the August 2015 and

		February 2016.
2.	MOU on technical development and cooperation in cyber space between National Security Council Secretariat and National Electronic Security Authority	This MoU provides for further deepening of cooperation in cyber space through setting up of joint Research & Development Centres of Excellence.
3.	MoU between the Ministry of Defence of the Government of the Republic of India and the Ministry of Defence of the Government of UAE on cooperation in the field of Defence Industry	This MoU aims to establish cooperation in the identified fields of defence manufacturing and technology, including through studies, research, development, innovation and cooperation between public and private sector institutions of the two countries. The two sides will cooperate in areas of armaments, defence industries and transfer of technology.
4.	MoU between the Government of the Republic of India and the Government of the UAE on Institutional Cooperation on Maritime Transport	This MoU provides a framework for enhancing bilateral maritime trade ties through facilitating maritime transport, free transfer of monies between contracting parties and reciprocal recognition of ships' documents.
5.	MOU between the Directorate General of Shipping, Republic of India and the Federal Transport Authority- Land and Maritime in the UAE on Mutual Recognition of Certificates of Competency as per the provisions of the Standards of Training, Certification and Watch-keeping Convention (STCW78) and amendments thereof	This MoU aims to deepen the maritime economic activities in general by establishing a framework for Mutual Recognition of Certificates of Competency of marine officers, engineers and crews.
6.	MoU between the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways of the Republic of India and the Federal Transport Authority, Land and Maritime of the UAE on Bilateral Cooperation in the Road Transport and Highways Sector	This MoU aims to establish cooperation in the sectors of Highways and Road transport through sharing of technologies, systems and best practices in freight logistics, warehousing and value added services.
7.	MOU between the Government of the Republic of India and the Government of UAE on cooperation in prevention and combating of human trafficking	This MoU aims to enhance bilateral cooperation on the issue of prevention, rescue, recovery and repatriation related to human trafficking, especially of women and children expeditiously.
8.	MoU for the cooperation in the field of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and innovation between the Ministry of Economy of United Arab Emirates and Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MoSMSME) of the Republic of India	This MoU aims at promoting cooperation in MSMEs Sectors, including in joint projects, R & D and related activities.

9.	MoU between the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare of the Republic of India and the Ministry of Climate Change & Environment of UAE in agriculture and Allied sectors	This MoU aims to develop a framework for cooperation in various agricultural fields of mutual interest, including through enhancement of cooperation in food processing and transfer of technology in cultivation methods.
10.	MOU between the Government of the Republic of India and the Government of UAE on mutual exemption of entry visa requirements to the holders of Diplomatic, special and Official Passports	The agreement allows holders of diplomatic, special and official passports visa free travel between the two countries.
11.	MoU between Prasar Bharati, India and Emirates News Agency (WAM), UAE for cooperation in programme exchange	This MoU aims to strengthen ties between Prasar Bharati and Emirates News Agency (WAM), UAE through cooperation in the field of broadcasting, mutual exchange of programmes, news and best practices.
12.	MoU between the Ministry of Commerce and Industry of the Republic of India and the Ministry of Economy of United Arab Emirates on trade remedial measures to promote cooperation in areas of mutual interest	This MoU aims to enhance cooperation in the field of anti-dumping and allied duties through exchange of information, capacity-building, seminars and trainings in mutually identified areas related to trade remedial measures.
13.	Agreement on Oil Storage And Management between Indian Strategic Petroleum Reserves Limited and Abu Dhabi National Oil Company	This agreement aims to establish a framework for the storage of crude oil by Abu Dhabi National Oil Company in India and to further strengthen the strategic relationship between the two countries in the field of energy.
14.	MOU between National Productivity Council and Al Etihad Energy Services Co. LLC	This MOU is on Cooperation in Energy Efficiency Services.

Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, http://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/27967/List_of_AgreementsMOUs_exchanged_during_the_State_visit_of_Crown_Prince_of_Abu_Dhabi_to_India

j. MULTILATERAL

20. Open Debate 'The Situation in the Middle East', Statement by Ambassador Tanmaya Lal, Deputy Permanent Representative, New York, 17 January 2017

President, thank you for convening this open-debate on the Middle East.

2. These quarterly meetings of the Security Council are a stark reminder that the situation in the Middle East remains fragile, and peace and reconciliation continue to elude us. Violence and terror continue unabated, leading to large scale suffering and exodus of refugees. The effects of these are being felt far and wide.

3. These quarterly deliberations are also a pointer to this inter-connectedness of peace and security across regions and the importance that the international community, therefore, attaches to the pursuit of peaceful and just resolution of these conflicts.

4. The international efforts have, however, proven largely insufficient and ineffective in addressing the multiple challenges to peace and security in the region.

President,

5. Despite this gloomy backdrop, as we commence a new year, we can discern at least some developments that can offer us hope, including in the context of the Middle East Peace Process, the recent Syrian truce and the formation of the unity government in Lebanon.

President,

6. The lack of any significant forward movement on the Palestine issue, ever since the collapse of talks nearly three years ago, continues to cause concern. The last one and half year has seen a further deterioration of the security situation in Palestine.

7. Only a negotiated two-State solution can bring sustainable peace and lasting security. Therefore, the imperative need is of restraint and moderation on all sides. We stress that it is the collective responsibility of the two sides to ensure that they move closer to a solution.

8. We welcome the latest effort by the international community to promote peace through the recently concluded Conference in Paris in which more than 70 countries, including India, participated.

9. At the same time, India continues to invest in its development efforts, including through capacity building and skill development to empower Palestinian youth with opportunities to improve their lives.

President,

10. The truce in Syria, which came into effect on 30th December, has been a much needed positive development. We welcome all efforts to end violence in Syria and to jumpstart the political process, and in this context welcome the UN Security Council Resolution 2336 adopted two weeks ago.

11. India's Minister of State for External Affairs M J Akbar, during his recent visit to Syria, expressed the hope that 'the age of destruction should give way to reconstruction in Syria' and that the solution to the crisis in Syria should be through a comprehensive political process that achieves and accommodates the aspirations of the Syrian people.

12. We look forward to the outcome of the direct talks scheduled for later this month in Astana. It is encouraging that the process is committed to the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic and is led and owned by Syria. Meaningful involvement of the UN is also essential in the process.

President,

13. In Lebanon, the recent election of President Michel Aoun and the subsequent formation of a national unity Government under the leadership of Prime Minister Saad Hariri have been further positive developments. The President of India, in his congratulatory message, has expressed our hope that the new Presidency will usher an era of political stability and progress in Lebanon.

14. We hope that these developments will also be helpful from the perspective of regional stability. Lebanon's example of resolving complex sectarian issues with institutional means through political processes has valuable lessons for other similar situations in the region.

President,

15. Whether it is 'salam' or 'shalom', the deep seated yearning for peace across peoples is only too evident. We hope that 2017 will bring about a surge in 'diplomacy for peace', as has been called for by the new Secretary General. Pragmatism and compromise are essential to move forward in the larger interest. History has shown that only peaceful co-existence is sustainable over long term.

Thank You, President.

Source: Permanent Mission of India to the UN, New York
<http://www.pminewyork.org/pages.php?id=2576>

Note: For Lok Sabha and Press Information Bureau the items can be searched by Date and Ministries concerned.

1 Crore = 10 million. Lakh = 100,000

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