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**Special issue**

**Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in Saudi Arabia,**

**27 February- 1 March 2010**

**Compiled by**

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**1. Ambassador Trad interacts with Indian media representatives, 3 February 2010**

The Ambassador of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques to the Republic of India, H. E. Mr. Faisal Hassan Trad hosted a working lunch for a number of senior editors and journalists from leading Indian media organizations, during which he presented a detailed account of important political, economic and social developments taking place in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia since the assumption of power by the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz Al-Saud, as well as important initiatives announced by the King especially in the field of dialogue among civilizations and cultures, and those concerning provision of energy to the poor.

The Ambassador also made a detailed presentation on the growing and deepening Saudi-India relations that have entered a new phase of multi-level strategic partnership since the historic visit of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz to India in 2006 and

the signing of New Delhi Declaration. He told the media persons that this partnership encompasses all political, economic, trade, investment, scientific, technological and cultural fields, adding that the bilateral trade between the two countries has gone up more than 300 per cent since 2000, jumping from US \$ 3 billion to US \$ 27 billion in 2008, and that the Kingdom has become number one source of crude oil for India, making the latter fifth largest trade partner of the Kingdom.

The Ambassador stated that preparations are underway for the visit of H.E. Dr. Manmohan Singh, the Prime Minister of India to Saudi Arabia in the near future, which is expected to open a new chapter in the relations at all levels. A large number of agreements covering the security, scientific, cultural, and economic and investment fields are expected to be signed during the visit.

Ambassador Faisal Trad said that development of relations between Saudi Arabia and India is important for the security and stability of the South and West Asia, in view of the two countries having wise leadership, vast political and economic capabilities and a sincere desire to advance the security, stability and prosperity of the nations.

**Source: Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia, New Delhi**

<http://www.mofa.gov.sa/Detail.asp?InNewsItemID=105197>

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## **2. Visit of Prime Minister to Saudi Arabia (27 February-1 March, 2010), 26 February 2010**

Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, Dr. Manmohan Singh, accompanied by Mrs. Gursharan Kaur will be visiting the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia from February 27 - March 1, 2010 at the invitation of His Majesty King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz, Custodian of the two Holy Mosques. He will also be accompanied by Hon'ble, Minister of Health and Family Welfare, Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas, Minister of Commerce and Industry, Minister of State for External Affairs and a number of senior officials. This visit comes four years after the landmark visit of His Majesty King Abdullah, who was the Chief Guest at India's Republic Day in 2006.

India and Saudi Arabia enjoy traditionally close and friendly relations based on historical linkages that date back for millennia, and have deepened and diversified over time. The visit provides an opportunity for the two leaders to review bilateral relations and also to discuss regional and global issues in the spirit of the "Delhi Declaration" which was signed in 2006. The visit aims at reinforcing the strategic partnership between the two countries. Several agreements and MoUs representing a broad range of cooperation in the areas of Security, S&T, Culture, Media etc. will be signed which will further enrich and institutionalize the strategic objectives and cooperation between India and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The Prime Minister has also been invited to address the Shura Council which is a unique honour bestowed upon select dignitaries.

Saudi Arabia is an important trading and energy security partner. The bilateral trade between India and Saudi Arabia during 2008-2009 exceeded US\$ 25 billion. Many Indian companies are active in various sectors. A 25-member CEOs delegation is also visiting and will have interactions with their Saudi counterparts to establish mutually beneficial business partnerships. The Prime Minister will address the captains of Saudi businesses and industry during his visit.

During the visit, Prime Minister will have substantive discussions with His Majesty King Abdullah and several Saudi Ministers will also call on the Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister will also be interacting with a cross section of the Indian community in Saudi Arabia, which numbers nearly 1.8 million at present, and whose role and contribution for the development of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is widely appreciated in Saudi Arabia.

**Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi**

<http://meaindia.nic.in/pressrelease/2010/02/26pr01.htm>

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### **3. Briefing by Secretary (East) on forthcoming visit of PM to Saudi Arabia, 26 February 2010**

**Official Spokesperson (Mr. Vishnu Prakash):** Good evening and thanks for joining us. Secretary (East) Ms. Latha Reddy is here to brief you on Prime Minister's forthcoming visit to Saudi Arabia. As you are aware, Prime Minister would be leaving for Saudi Arabia tomorrow. Let me also introduce my colleague, to the right of Secretary (East), Mr. Anil Trigunayat, who is our Joint Secretary (Gulf). Secretary (East) would be making her opening remarks and thereafter, she will be happy to take questions pertaining to Prime Minister's visit to Saudi Arabia. May I request Secretary (East) to make her opening remarks?

**Secretary East (Ms. Vijaya Latha Reddy):** Good Afternoon. I am here to brief you on Prime Minister's visit to Saudi Arabia, which begins tomorrow, the 27th of February. Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, Dr. Manmohan Singh, accompanied by Smt. Gursharan Kaur will be visiting the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia from February 27 - March 1, 2010 at the invitation of His Majesty King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz, Custodian of the two Holy Mosques. He will also be accompanied on his visit by Hon'ble Minister of Health and Family Welfare, Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas, Minister of Commerce and Industry, Minister of State for External Affairs and a number of senior officials. This visit comes four years after the landmark visit of His Majesty King Abdullah, who was the Chief Guest at India's Republic Day in 2006.

As you all know, India and Saudi Arabia are bound by common and shared history, close and regular contacts that date back for millennia, and for Muslim brothers and sisters is a place of pilgrimage where the two holy Mosques are situated. The historical linkages do indeed date back for thousands of years and have deepened and diversified. The visit also aims at reinforcing the strategic partnership between the two countries. Several agreements and MoUs representing a broad range of cooperation in the areas of Security, S&T, Culture, Media etc. will be signed which will further enrich and institutionalize the strategic objectives and cooperation between India and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The Prime Minister will also address the Shura Council which is a unique honour bestowed upon select dignitaries.

Saudi Arabia is an important trading and energy security partner. The bilateral trade between India and Saudi Arabia during 2008-2009 exceeded US\$ 25 billion. Many Indian companies are active in Saudi Arabia in various sectors. A 25-member CEOs delegation is also visiting Saudi Arabia at the time of visit of Prime Minister and will have interactions with their Saudi counterparts to establish mutually beneficial business partnerships. The Prime Minister will address the captains of Saudi businesses and industry during his visit.

During the visit, Prime Minister will have substantive discussions with His Majesty King Abdullah and several Saudi Ministers will also call on the Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister will also be interacting with a cross section of the Indian community in Saudi Arabia, which numbers nearly 1.8 million at present, and whose role and contribution for the development of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is widely appreciated there. I will be happy to take questions.

**Question:** Madam, we hear that there are two treaties, one is the Extradition Treaty and the other is on transfer of sentenced persons. Are they expected to be signed during this visit?

**Secretary (East):** We do expect to sign agreements covering various subjects, but the formal announcements regarding the signing will be made during the visit.

**Question:** Is there any investment fund in the pipeline with regard to Saudi Arabia?

**Secretary (East):** This is also under discussion, and we are hoping that that can also be finalized.

**Question:** Madam, could you indicate to us the kind of perspective that the Prime Minister will enunciate in his speech at Shura Council?

**Secretary (East):** The Shura Council is a very influential body. It is made up of the top, I would say, intellectual elite in Saudi Arabia and they are nominated by the Al Shura by His Majesty. Therefore, addressing them becomes a matter of great importance, and we would expect that the

Prime Minister would try to give an overview of what India's position is on various issues, and also talk about the bilateral relationship and how much importance we place on it.

I thought I could also add a few facts in addition to the opening remarks. For instance, since King Abdullah's landmark visit here in 2006 we have had 19 exchanges at the Ministerial level between our two countries. Similarly, trade has tripled during this time. Saudi Arabia remains very important to us because it is such a big energy partner. I think we now get 20 per cent of our energy imports from Saudi Arabia.

We have talked about having a strategic partnership, and economic engagement is a very important element of this. The fact that such a large Business Delegation is accompanying the Prime Minister; we have expressed our interest not just in energy collaboration but also in fertilizer plants which could be joint ventures. There are many areas like this which could be identified. I think the scope for investments is very large.

...

**Question:** There is an old demand to increase the number of pilgrimage slots from India. Will the Prime Minister talk to the King about increasing the number of *Hajj* pilgrims?

**Secretary (East):** I believe the number for the *Hajj* pilgrims has been increasing every year. In fact, last year it touched about 167,000 which is the highest it has ever been. So, there has been a steady growth. But I also understand that there is a worldwide demand for more slots for the *Hajj* pilgrims. It would finally be a question of how the Saudi Arabian authorities can equitably distribute the slots which are available. But because we have such a large Muslim population, we do get a very large share of the pilgrimage slots.

**Question:** A doubt, Madam. Why did it take 28 years since Mrs. Gandhi visited Saudi Arabia for the Indian Prime Minister to go there? Are we expecting something like a Riyadh Declaration on the lines of Delhi Declaration when Saudi King last visited India?

**Secretary (East):** I think what we should really see is that the momentum of the relationship has stepped up in the last few years. The fact that King Abdullah, after a very long gap of a visit by Saudi royalty to India, came here in 2006 was very significant. The fact that we are returning the visit at the level of our Head of Government within a relatively short gap as compared to the previous years is also significant. As I said, we have had 19 Ministerial visits in between. So, I would say that we should really look at the present and the future in this context.

**Question:** Madam, what is the status of cooperation with Saudi Arabia on counter-terrorism. I believe the Saudi Intelligence Chief did visit India immediately after the Mumbai attacks. So, what is the status of cooperation that we have with Saudi Arabia?

**Secretary (East):** We certainly do share information with all countries with whom we have friendly relations, and we do have mechanisms in place. You would appreciate that these are

matters which cannot always be made public, but certainly we will take up all issues of concern to us in the talks which will take place during this visit.

**Question:** Would you characterize the cooperation as good, effective, excellent?

**Secretary (East):** I would say the cooperation is active.

**Question:** Madam, can you share details of the PM's call-ons with Saudi leaders?...

**Secretary (East):** What we have indicated so far in the programme confirmed is, of course, his meeting with His Majesty the King, which would be a substantive meeting, as I have said. There would also be delegation-level talks. Several of the top-ranking Ministers will be calling on PM.

**Question:** Madam, will our Prime Minister be taking up the issue of regional security vis-à-vis Afghanistan, Pakistan? As we know, after the London Conference, Mr. Hamid Karzai has reached out to Saudi Arabia for the reintegration of Taliban. Will we be taking up this issue in this context?

**Secretary (East):** I believe that such visits will always cover a wide range of subjects. Normally in such visits our leaders brief their counterparts on important developments in the region apart from discussing bilateral ties and international relations. So, I am sure that all these important issues will be covered in the talks.

**Official Spokesperson:** Thank you very much.

**Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi**

<http://meaindia.nic.in/pressbriefing/2010/02/26pb01.htm>

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#### **4. Prime Minister's Statement prior to his departure to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 27 February 2010**

I am leaving today on a bilateral visit to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia at the invitation of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdul-Aziz Al Saud.

My visit carries special significance. I am conscious of the fact that this will be only the third visit by an Indian Prime Minister to Saudi Arabia. I, therefore, have a vast agenda for discussions with the Saudi leadership.

My visit reflects the strong mutual desire of both countries to reinvigorate our relations, as manifested in His Majesty King Abdullah's historic visit to India in 2006 as the Chief Guest of our Republic Day celebrations. The Delhi Declaration that we signed on that occasion constitutes a valuable blueprint for our cooperation in the future.

The Gulf region is an area of vital importance for India's security and prosperity. India and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia have enjoyed special relations based on several millennia of civilizational and cultural linkages and people to people exchanges. The Kingdom is India's largest and most reliable supplier of our energy needs from the region. Saudi Arabia is home to an Indian community numbering about 1.8 million. As many as 165000 Indian pilgrims perform the *Hajj* annually. Our trade and investment linkages have grown though they remain much below the potential of our two economies, and must be broad based.

I will have the honour of holding talks with the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdul-Aziz Al Saud on how can we promote greater stability and security in the region, and impart a strategic character to our relations beyond the traditional areas of our cooperation. There is great scope for opening new frontiers of cooperation in the areas of security, defence, science and technology, space, human resources development and knowledge-based industries. I believe India and Saudi Arabia have much to gain by cooperating with each other in combating extremism and terrorism. I expect to discuss the situation in Afghanistan and other regional issues of mutual interest.

During my visit I look forward to addressing the distinguished members of the Majlis Al-Shura. A business delegation of CEOs is accompanying me, and I will address the Council of Saudi Chambers of Commerce and Industry. In addition, I will meet members of the Indian community.

**Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi**

<http://meaindia.nic.in/speech/2010/02/27ss01.htm>

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## **5. Text of Prime Minister's interview with Saudi journalists, 27 February 2010**

Following is the text of Prime Minister's interview with Saudi journalists on the eve of his visit to Saudi Arabia:

**Q. 1.** Hon. PM, Both India and Saudi Arabia have hailed the visit of Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah to New Delhi in January 2006 as a landmark development marking the start of strategic relations between the two countries. Today, nearly four years later, what is your assessment of the progress made in this reinvigorated partnership that was initiated as part of King Abdullah's 'Look East' policy? What are the most significant achievements so far?

**Ans.:** The visit of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdul-Aziz to India as Chief Guest at our Republic Day in January 2006 was a landmark event. This was the first visit of a Saudi ruler to India after 50 years. The Delhi Declaration signed by His Majesty



King Abdullah and me enshrined our commitment to pursue a common strategic vision for promoting regional peace and security and for the enhancement of our relations in the political, economic, security and cultural fields.

We have made considerable progress in realizing our vision to strengthen our bilateral partnership. There have been regular high level Ministerial exchanges as well as intensified interaction among the business community, academia and other sections of society. The meeting of the India-Saudi Arabia Joint Commission took place in November 2009, which has put in place an ambitious agenda for bilateral cooperation. Saudi Arabia is India's fourth largest trading partner with two-way trade of over \$ 25 billion. The number of joint ventures in the Kingdom is over 500 with an estimated investment of over US\$ 2 billion. We welcome increased investments from Saudi Arabia into India especially in the infrastructure sector where mutually beneficial opportunities exist.

**Q. 2.** Please give me a brief synopsis of the talks that you intend to have with King Abdullah and other senior Saudi officials during your visit to Saudi Arabia this month. The visit is significant for Riyadh since an Indian PM will be visiting the Kingdom after 28 years.

**Ans.:** India and Saudi Arabia belong to the same extended neighbourhood. In the Delhi Declaration, we had pledged to work together not just for our bilateral benefit, but also to promote peace, stability and security in the region and the world. Both King Abdullah and I reject the notion that any cause justifies wanton violence against innocent people. We are strong allies against the scourge of extremism and terrorism that affects global peace and security.

During my visit, I propose to discuss with King Abdullah how can we promote greater stability and security in the region. We also have a substantial agenda for the advancement of bilateral relations in diverse areas such as trade and investment, energy, defence and security, social and cultural cooperation, and people-to-people exchanges. I look forward to interacting with the members of the business community in Saudi Arabia and inviting them to be a partner in India's rapid socio-economic transformation through major infrastructure, energy, industry and services related projects.

**Q. 3.** Which are the agreements or MoUs, India will sign with the Kingdom during your visit? Please name them and spell out briefly the features of those agreements.

**Ans.:** Several cooperation agreements are likely to be signed during my visit which will represent a broad range of Indo-Saudi cooperation in the fields of economic cooperation, culture, science and technology and information technology. I am confident these will further enrich our close relations.

**Q. 4.** Your visit to the Kingdom takes place at a time when that region is in the midst of tension in Iran and also in Iraq and Afghanistan, with the US and the Western countries continuing to



exert pressure on Iran over the nuclear issue. What role do you foresee India playing in this context in partnership with the Kingdom?

**Ans.:** We are witnessing significant geo-political developments, which will directly impact on the peace and stability in the region. All these issues need to be addressed through sustained efforts. I believe that India and Saudi Arabia, as two major countries in the region, have an important stake and responsibility in this regard. In my dialogue with the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdul-Aziz, I propose to review the regional scenario, and discuss how we can work together to address the complex issues at hand.

**Q. 5.** How do you assess India's partnership with the Gulf States, especially Saudi Arabia, when it comes to fighting terrorism? What collective measures India, with SAARC states and Gulf States, are taking to combat this evil?

**Ans.:** Terrorism remains the single biggest threat to peace, stability and to our progress. Global efforts are needed to defend the values of pluralism, peaceful co-existence and the rule of law. All the member countries of the GCC share India's concerns relating to extremism and terrorism. We reject the idea that any religion or cause can be used to justify violence against innocent people. We have institutionalized our cooperation with the Gulf countries by putting in place various security cooperation agreements, including extradition treaties.

SAARC as an organization has committed itself to fighting terrorism. The SAARC Council of Ministers Meeting in February 2009 issued a Ministerial Declaration on Cooperation in Combating Terrorism. Given the fact that today extremist and terrorist activities straddle South Asia and West Asia and constitute a grave threat to our peoples, I agree that the SAARC and GCC anti-terrorism efforts should be more effectively coordinated.

**Q. 6.** Does India intend to conclude a defence pact with the Kingdom?

**Ans.:** We do not have a defence agreement with Saudi Arabia. Since the visit of His Majesty King Abdullah bin Abdul-Aziz to India four years ago, our defence ties have, however, diversified and become more substantial. We have exchanged visits of our service Chiefs and naval ships, and Saudi officers have participated in our training programmes, including at the prestigious National Defence College. We look forward to deepening our defence cooperation with Saudi Arabia.

**Q. 7.** There is concern in the Middle East about growing Indo-Israeli defence cooperation in recent times, which many fear could be at the expense of India's traditional support for Arab causes. How do you address this concern?

**Ans.:** I would submit that this concern is misplaced. Our relationship with no single country is at the expense of our relations with any other country. Indeed, India's relations with the countries in West Asia gives us the opportunity to interact in diverse ways with this very important region.

As far as India's support for Palestine is concerned, this is an article of faith for us. Our solidarity with the people of Palestine predates our independence. India supports a peaceful solution that would result in a sovereign, independent, viable and united State of Palestine living within secure and recognized borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, side by side at peace with Israel as endorsed in the Quartet Road Map and the relevant Security Council Resolutions. We also support the Arab Peace Plan.

I recently had the pleasure of hosting His Excellency President Mahmoud Abbas and reiterating to him our steadfast support for Palestine and its people.

**Q. 8.** How do you see the future relationship of India with Arab world?

**Ans.:** India's ties with the Arab world go back several millennia. While we recall our historic ties with great pride, we do recognize that relationships have to be constantly nourished and revitalized so that they respond to new realities and aspirations. India and the Arab world are witnessing a rapid modernization of their societies and economies. The India of today is vastly different from what we were at the time of our independence. The same is true of the Arab world.

There is no conflict of interest between us. To the contrary, our destinies are tied together and we have much to gain by intensifying our cooperation with each other. We have a huge stake in each other's success, and to that extent ours is a relationship that is of strategic importance.

I would like to see a much greater integration of our economies, higher flow of trade and investment, better connectivities and freer flow of ideas and people. This has in fact been our historical legacy, and we should revive that legacy. From our side, there are no impediments to a rapid, sustained and comprehensive expansion of relations between India and the Arab world.

**Q. 9.** How can India play more active role in enhancing the dialogue between east and west? How do you view King Abdullah's initiative for the interfaith dialogue which started in Madrid? What role can Indian Muslims play to enhance the interfaith dialogue?

**Ans.:** India is a 5000 year old civilization that today represents a confluence of religions, languages and cultures. We deeply value the principles of peaceful co-existence and harmony among nations. We will continue to work with all like-minded countries to create a just and equitable international order that is conducive to meeting the challenges of poverty, illiteracy and hunger.

We deeply appreciate and support the idea of an inter-faith dialogue. The knowledge of religious beliefs and practices of other people is important in itself and can foster greater understanding and tolerance. We have experience of this in our own country. Islam is an integral part of India's democratic and secular fabric. Muslims in India are part of our national mosaic, and have

enriched our society. Like all other Indians, they enjoy the full protection of our laws, and the full rights guaranteed to every Indian under our Constitution.

**Q. 10.** Some 1.8 million Indians live and work in Saudi Arabia. What steps is your government taking for their welfare?

**Ans.:** We are extremely proud of the fact that the Indian community in the Gulf region has been contributing to the socio-economic development of the region. There are over 5 million Indian workers in the Gulf, of which almost 2 million live and work in Saudi Arabia alone. We are very grateful for the warm welcome they have received throughout the region.

The welfare of such a large overseas Indian community is a matter of high priority for my government. The Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs, which we had set up six years ago, has worked tirelessly for the welfare of the Indian community in consultation with the host governments. The governments of several GCC countries have themselves set up mechanisms such as grievance redressal bodies and labour courts that are working closely with our officials. In addition, we have signed MoUs on labour and manpower with most of the GCC countries.

At the Indian end, we are in the process of reforming our own procedures, including better regulation of the recruitment process. We have also put in place arrangements in all Gulf countries, including Saudi Arabia, to respond to workers' grievances. These include a 24-hour helpline, temporary shelters, counselling centres, and strengthened Community Welfare Wings in our diplomatic Missions.

**Q.11.** Your stated position is that while India is ready to keep talking to Pakistan, the stalled peace process can resume only if Islamabad acts against the alleged planners of the Mumbai attack. With the announcement of resumption of dialogue on secretaries level, does this considered a change in the government stand. What will be the basis of the forthcoming dialogue?

**Ans.:** There is no change in our position. We seek a peaceful and normal relationship with Pakistan. We should be good neighbours. In that quest we have consistently sought to engage those in Pakistan who are ready to work with us. There is no alternative to dialogue to resolve the issues that divide us. Today the primary issue is terrorism.

**Q.12.** How serious is the Pakistan Taliban threat to India, especially to Jammu & Kashmir which has bubbled up again. How could the Kashmir issue be solved once and for all?

**Ans.:** As a neighbour, we cannot remain immune to the rise of extremism and terrorism in Pakistan, or on the border of Pakistan and Afghanistan. Extremism and terrorism are major threats not only to India, but also to Pakistan, and all its other neighbours. It is in our collective interest that we resolutely oppose, resist and overcome terrorism and all those who nurture, sustain and give sanctuary to terrorists and extremist elements.

It is a fact that Jammu and Kashmir and its people have suffered repeatedly at the hands of terrorism from across the border. This has militated against the will of the people of the State, who have time and again voted in large numbers in democratic elections to unambiguously reject violence. We have taken several measures for the development of Jammu and Kashmir, and for its people to live in peace and harmony, as in the rest of the country. In so far as our dialogue with Pakistan is concerned, we are ready to discuss all issues with them in an atmosphere free from terrorism.

**Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi**

<http://meaindia.nic.in/interview/2010/02/27in01.htm>

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## **6. Prime Minister's Remarks at the Council of Saudi Chambers of Commerce and Industry, 28 February 2010**

Following is the text of Prime Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh's remarks at the Council of Saudi Chambers of Commerce and Industry in Riyadh on February 28, 2010.

"Your Excellency Abdullah Zainal Ali Reza, Minister of Commerce and Industry, Your Excellency Abdul Rahman Al-Jeraisy, Vice Chairman of the Council of Saudi Chambers of Commerce, Distinguished Guests,

I am grateful to the Council of Saudi Chambers and Industry for giving me this opportunity to interact with such a distinguished group of business leaders. I would also like to thank the business leaders from India who have travelled here today.

I have had some association with the evolution of the India-Saudi Arabia economic partnership. As the Finance Minister of India, I attended the 4th session of the India-Saudi Arabia Joint Commission in 1994. This is my first visit to Saudi Arabia as Prime Minister. A lot has changed between then and now in our bilateral relations, in our two economies and in the global environment.

The visit of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdul-Aziz Al Saud to India in January 2006 was a defining moment in our relations. The landmark Delhi Declaration that His Majesty and I signed identified higher flows of trade and investment, better connectivity and exchange of ideas as the central pillars of our joint vision for an enhanced economic partnership.

I look forward to my dialogue later today with His Majesty to carry forward the momentum and take the entire gamut of our relations to even greater heights. I believe this is not only eminently possible, but also necessary.

Since 1990, Saudi Arabia's economy has quadrupled in size. It has undergone substantial diversification with the strengthening of the non-oil sector. The ambitious economic cities that are proposed to be set up have the potential to further transform the Saudi economy. All these developments have and will widen employment opportunities for the growing young population in Saudi Arabia, and enhance Saudi Arabia's economic weight globally.

India, too, has registered significant growth. We are in the midst of a major socio-economic transformation. Our economy has grown at an average annual rate of over nine percent in the last few years. Despite the global economic slowdown, we hope to achieve a growth rate of over 7 percent in the current financial year. We expect to get back to the growth level of about 9 percent per annum within two years. Our domestic saving rates are high, and can support investment rates of as high as 38 percent of our Gross Domestic Product. India is an economy with a huge market, and a young and expanding work force. We have a vibrant and innovative private sector.

Both countries have in place a sound institutional mechanism to facilitate trade and investment, including a Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement and Bilateral Investment Protection Agreement. Eight meetings of the Joint Commission have been held, the last having met in October 2009. We cooperate within the framework of the India-GCC Industrial Conference, and negotiations are in progress to finalize a India-Gulf Cooperation Council Free Trade Agreement.

We deeply value Saudi Arabia's role as a reliable partner in meeting our energy needs. We believe that conditions are ripe for moving beyond a traditional buyer-seller relationship to a comprehensive energy partnership. Indian companies are well equipped to participate in upstream and downstream oil and gas sector projects in Saudi Arabia. We should also establish new partnerships in the area of new and renewable energy through sharing of clean technologies and joint collaborations.

The robust growth of our economies offer immense opportunities for business communities from both sides. Our bilateral trade has reached almost 25 billion US dollars in 2008-09. Indian investments into the Kingdom have risen considerably and today stand at more than 2 billion US dollars covering over 500 joint ventures. Several major Indian companies have already established their presence in the Kingdom. Our public sector company, RITES has recently won a contract to participate in the North-South Railways project. There is however potential for doing much more.

India's needs for high quality modern infrastructure are vast. We have opened our doors to foreign investment and I invite investors and entrepreneurs from Saudi Arabia to explore investment opportunities in India. I would specifically refer to the construction, manufacturing, pharmaceuticals, health, agriculture, energy, telecommunications, tourism and other service sectors.

We should also look at new areas of cooperation. Education and skill development are of primary importance to both our countries. India has a proven track record in the field of

knowledge-based industries, which have great potential for improving the skill set of the work force. India would be happy to share her experience with Saudi Arabia in the area of human resources development. Cooperation in the areas of science and technology and space technology are other areas for future cooperation.

I would encourage greater exchanges among the Chambers, industry associations and business houses of both sides. More frequent participation in trade fairs and exhibitions will create greater awareness of each others' capabilities. I can assure you that the government will extend its full support to the expansion of business-to-business links between our two countries.

The integration of our economies with the rest of the world has created new opportunities but also brought new challenges. The global financial crisis has thrown up a broad agenda for global action and reforms. The role of emerging economies such as India and Saudi Arabia within the G-20 framework and otherwise will be crucial to the restructuring of the global economic and financial architecture.

We view our economic cooperation with Saudi Arabia in the wider context of our interactions with the entire Gulf region. This is an area with which we have deep and historical ties. The Gulf countries are our natural partners in every sense of the term. Indians are the largest expatriate community in every country of the Gulf Cooperation Council. Our businesses should work together across the region, develop cross-country linkages and leverage economies of scale.

I am confident that such interactions will bring vitality and dynamism in the cooperation between our two economies. India sees Saudi Arabia as a strategic partner for promoting peace, stability and economic development. Such a partnership will bring benefits not only to our two countries but to the region we both belong to, and to the world at large.”

**Source: Prime Minister's Office Press Release, Press Information Bureau, New Delhi**

<http://www.pib.nic.in/release/release.asp?relid=58612>

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## **7. Media Briefing by Secretary (East) on Prime Minister's Meetings in Riyadh, 28 February 2010**

**Official Spokesperson (Mr. Vishnu Prakash):** A very good evening to you all and good to see you again. As you are aware, Prime Minister very recently concluded his call on His Majesty the King of Saudi Arabia and also the delegation level talks. Secretary (East) Ms. Latha Reddy is here along with our Ambassador Mr. Talmiz Ahmad to apprise you of PM's meetings. After the opening remarks, Secretary would be happy to take a few questions.

**Secretary (East) (Ms. Vijaya Latha Reddy):** Good evening. It has been a very successful day. I had already briefed you earlier on the meetings in the morning. This evening of course the notable issue has been the formal meeting between Prime Minister and His Majesty the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud. The meeting was held at the Al Rawad Palace, and there was a grand formal welcome ceremony with a Guard of Honour and the National Anthems. The King himself most graciously received the Prime Minister and participated in the whole ceremony, which is a rare honour bestowed on visiting dignitaries. After the arrival ceremony there was a formal dinner. That in turn was followed by delegation-level talks, after which we had the signing by both leaders, our Prime Minister and His Majesty King Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz. They signed the Riyadh Declaration – A New Era of Strategic Partnership. I believe all of you have got the text by now. I would just like to highlight a few of the salient points which I think would give you a broad overview of the issues of importance between our two countries and many of the issues which have been discussed during the meetings today.

Firstly, as you would see, the two leaders decided to raise our cooperation to a strategic partnership covering security, economic, defence and political areas. Secondly, the two leaders reiterated their desire to develop as knowledge-based economies, particularly focusing on information technology, space science and frontier technologies. The areas in which agreements were signed have also been highlighted. I will also talk about the agreements a little later.

The two leaders also emphasized the importance of strengthening the Strategic Energy Partnership based on complementarity and interdependence as already outlined in the Delhi Declaration including meeting India's increasing requirement of crude oil supplies and identifying and implementing specific projects for cooperation including in the areas of new and renewable energy.

The two leaders renewed condemnation of the phenomena of terrorism, extremism and violence, affirming that it is global and threatens all societies and is not linked to any race, colour or belief. They agreed that the international community must resolutely combat terrorism. They also agreed to enhance our cooperation in exchange of information relating to terrorist activities, money-laundering, narcotics, arms and human-trafficking and to develop joint strategies to combat these threats. They welcomed in this context the signing of the Extradition Treaty and the Agreement for Transfer of Sentenced Persons.

At the latter half of the Riyadh Declaration you would see the consultations that were held on various regional issues including the Middle East Peace Plan, the ongoing international efforts to assist Afghanistan's sovereignty and independence, the situation in Iraq. I think this gives you a broad overview of the issues which were discussed.

If I may move on to the Agreements, apart from the historic Riyadh Declaration both sides signed five agreements in the presence of the Prime Minister and His Majesty the King. The first



was the Extradition Treaty. Briefly, this treaty will further enhance the existing security cooperation between the two countries and will help authorities in apprehending wanted persons in each other's country. Secondly, on sentenced persons, this will be of assistance in the case of those serving prison sentences. We hope that this treaty will facilitate the transfer of Indian prisoners back to India where they could serve the remaining sentence.

The third agreement signed was a Memorandum of Understanding between the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and the King Abdul Aziz City for Science and Technology (KACST) for cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space. This MoU envisages bilateral cooperation between the two institutes in the field of space. It would include also the construction and launching of telecommunication satellites by India for Saudi Arabia.

The fourth agreement was on scientific and technological cooperation between our Department of Science and Technology in India and again the King Abdul Aziz City for Science and Technology in Saudi Arabia. This is a broad agreement regarding cooperation in the field of science and technology. It includes joint research projects, exchange of scientists and faculties, technological cooperation between the research and development institutes and organizations of both countries.

The fifth MoU that was signed this evening between the two Governments was the MoU on cultural cooperation between our respective Ministries of Culture. This is expected to further enhance the close cultural ties between our countries, and as is normal in the cultural cooperation agreements, it would cover exchanges of cultural troupes, cultural weeks, artefacts, exhibitions, etc.

Several other agreements were signed, though not during the formal Government-to-Government signing, during the visit. I would like to just briefly mention them to you. One of the agreements signed this afternoon at the business event was the agreement between Tata Motors and Hafil Transport. This includes supply of school buses worth 80 million dollars by Tata Motors. The second agreement signed at the business event was between the Gulf Bureau Research, Riyadh and the TFL Group Pvt. Ltd., Mumbai. This pertains to investment in stock market, wealth management and financial consultancy.

Two other agreements were signed on the sidelines of the visit today. One of them was the MoU between the Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC) and again the King Abdul Aziz City for Science and Technology (KACST) on cooperation in IT and services. This agreement envisages establishment of an India-Saudi Arabia ICT Centre of Excellence in Saudi Arabia. This fulfils the commitment made in Delhi Declaration, and both organizations will undertake joint scientific research projects at the proposed ICT Centre of Excellence.

The other agreement which was signed today was the agreement on news cooperation between the Saudi Press Agency and PTI. This will include cooperation between the leading news agencies of the two countries including exchange of news items. There will be one more MoU to

be signed tomorrow between the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore and King Saud University, Riyadh for cooperation in the field of research and education.

I think this gives you a broad overview of what we had achieved today. I think it would be correct to say that as the Delhi Declaration was a historic document, so too the Riyadh Declaration, which builds on the Delhi Declaration, is equally significant. The challenge now is that we must try to fully implement these declarations and see to it that the relationship moves much further.

I am sorry I forgot to mention this. The Prime Minister had a brief interaction with the visiting Indian Business Delegation. In the afternoon he had addressed the Saudi Chambers of Commerce and Industry. Of course, both Delegations were present there. But the Indian Delegation wished to debrief the Prime Minister on what had come out of their interactions. And they did say that it was a very positive impression that they had gained, that there was keen interest among the captains of Saudi business and industry in exploring opportunities in India. And their feeling was that much more could be done. Some of the areas which were specifically highlighted were energy, fertilizer sector, healthcare, pharmaceuticals, IT, biotechnology, etc. Some specific areas were identified. The feeling was that there was a renewed interest and that there was vast potential on both sides.

Prime Minister said that the presence of the high level business delegation had created a very favourable impression and that the Saudi Minister for Commerce and Industry had been particularly impressed by the quality and the level of the business delegation from India, which perhaps was one of the highest level business delegations to have visited Saudi Arabia. So, this was also a very useful and meaningful interaction which Prime Minister had earlier this evening before he proceeded to the Al Rawad Palace for his interaction with His Majesty the King.

This in a nutshell is what we have achieved today. Perhaps our Ambassador would like to add something or we can take questions.

**Indian Ambassador in Saudi Arabia:** We can take questions.

**Secretary (East):** The floor is open.

**Question:** Can you elaborate on the Extradition Treaty?

**Secretary (East):** I think most extradition treaties follow a fairly standard format because they are governed by international law provisions. They would simply lay down the procedures to be followed for both countries, how you present an extradition request, what are the procedures to be followed, and what are the grounds for making an extradition request. Obviously you have to have some criminal charges or the person has to be wanted in your own country to ask the other country to extradite them. So, it would be mainly technical in nature spelling out the procedures. What it does essentially is to enable the two countries to make these requests legally.

**Question:** You said “transfer of Indian prisoners”.

**Secretary (East):** Sentenced prisoners.

**Question:** Could you please elaborate that?

**Secretary (East):** Again the same thing. It would lay down the conditions under which there would be certain crimes for which you could ask for the transfer of sentenced prisoners. But obviously it would also depend on the discretion of the local authorities in each country, which sentenced prisoner could be sent, sometimes on compassionate grounds, sometimes on health grounds, sometimes again because they need to face some other procedures in the other country.

**Question:** Madam, on page 5 of the Declaration it is stated, “The two leaders emphasized the importance of regional and international efforts focusing on making the Middle East and Gulf Region free of all nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction”. Can you elaborate on that point?

**Secretary (East):** I think this ties in of course into India’s own policy of pushing for universal nuclear disarmament. When we are already pushing for universal nuclear disarmament, India would always support any proposal to rid all countries, all regions of nuclear weapons. Our main issue would be, it should be a non-discriminatory approach where all countries are treated equally.

**Question:** Was there any discussion regarding Indo-Saudi Joint Investment Fund?

**Secretary (East):** This came up in the earlier discussions with the Commerce and Industry Minister. Both sides agreed that it would be very good if such a Fund could be realized, and agreed to work positively towards finalizing such a Fund and setting it up because obviously it would encourage investment very strongly.

**Question:** It is stated on page 3 of Joint Declaration that “India invited Saudi Arabia to participate in crude storage facilities in India”. Could you please elaborate on that?

**Secretary (East):** There has been some interest on our part in creating crude oil storage facilities in India. These could be for domestic use as well as for use for storage of crude oil for shipping on to further destinations. So, this would have to be worked out on commercial terms with companies who would be interested in maintaining such a crude oil storage facility. But what was indicated was that we would be open to such proposals.

**Official Spokesperson:** Thank you very much.

**Source: Indian Embassy in Saudi Arabia, Riyadh**

[http://www.indianembassy.org.sa/press/Media%20Briefing%20by%20Secretary%20\(East\)%20on%20Prime%20Ministers%20Meetings%20in%20Riyadh-28%20February%202010.pdf](http://www.indianembassy.org.sa/press/Media%20Briefing%20by%20Secretary%20(East)%20on%20Prime%20Ministers%20Meetings%20in%20Riyadh-28%20February%202010.pdf)

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## 8. Media Briefing by Secretary (East) in Riyadh, 28 February 2010

**Official Spokesperson (Mr. Vishnu Prakash):** A very good evening to you and thanks for waiting. Secretary (East) Ms Latha Reddy is here to brief you about Prime Minister's engagements today. As you know, he has had a number of important engagements including his address at the Saudi Business Chamber. All of you were there at the Chamber and you also have the text of Prime Minister's remarks. Secretary will brief you about the other engagements of Prime Minister that have taken place so far.

**Secretary (East) (Ms Vijaya Latha Reddy):** Good afternoon and thank you all for coming. I am happy to give some of you, and others who have joined us today, a briefing on the developments up to date.

As you all know, the Prime Minister and his Delegation received a very warm welcome at the airport yesterday with the very unique honour that the Crown Prince himself, His Royal Highness Sultan Bin Abdul Aziz, the Defence Minister, was at the airport. This was indeed a gesture which was greatly appreciated.

Today the Prime Minister has had several meetings with several senior Ministers of the Saudi Government calling on him. He met with His Excellency Ali al-Naimi, the Minister of Oil and Mineral Resources. After that he met with His Royal Highness Prince Saud al-Faisal, the Foreign Minister; and thereafter with Mr. Abdullah Zainal Alireza, the Minister for Commerce and Industry.

I would like to give you a few brief points about some main issues that were touched upon during these meetings. Firstly, on the economic and commercial side both sides expressed happiness that our trade is growing and that we are now a 26 billion dollars two-way trade. But it was felt that there is vast potential yet to be tapped, particularly in the area of investments. Both sides agreed to work towards facilitating major joint ventures in investment between our countries.

Some of the areas which were identified were: petrochemicals, fertilizers, and tie-ups also between institutes of technology, the healthcare sector. Overall, the Saudi dignitaries expressed confidence that there would be a substantial increase in Saudi investment in India over the coming years as India was seen as a safe and secure environment for investments.

They also expressed interest in seeing an early conclusion of the GCC Free Trade Agreement. Both sides agreed to give importance to this subject and to work towards an early conclusion of this agreement which would certainly boost trade between the two countries.

The Saudi dignitaries expressed very positive feelings about the presence of the Indian community here and the very important contribution they have made to this country. They said

that through their trustworthiness and dependability they have truly become not just the largest community of foreign nationals here in Saudi Arabia but also one of the most dependable.

Aramco Company informed us that they have set up a procurement office in India which is procuring up to 400 million US dollars worth of goods and services from India.

On our side, Prime Minister emphasized that we do already have in place the Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement and the Bilateral Investment Protection Agreement which would give a good safeguard and guarantee for any major investments by Saudi Arabia. It was also decided that the Joint Commission which already exists and meets on a regular basis will carry forward all the important issues on trade, investment, economic matters.

Both countries agreed that their national industrial development policies would be a useful area for mutual exchange of information since both countries have expressed interest in bringing up the share of their manufacturing industries in their respective GDPs. They also agreed to keep direct lines of communication open to resolve all issues.

On the political and foreign policy side, we exchanged views on developments in the Middle East and on the status of the peace process in the Middle East. Our Prime Minister reiterated our strong support for the Arab Peace Plan which we saw as the way forward. We also exchanged views on developments in India's neighbourhood and recent issues there; and we asked for the viewpoint of the Saudi Arabia on their region. This was a useful exchange of views.

After these meetings with the Ministers, as you all know, the Prime Minister attended a brief ceremony at the Council of the Saudi Chambers of Commerce and Industry. I believe many of you were there and I am sure you were impressed by the keen interest shown in a large cross section of the top captains of Saudi business and industry. Equally on our side we had a very high level and representative and diverse business delegation which had been brought from India. The Prime Minister briefly addressed the gathering. I believe the text of his Address is already available with you. We also heard brief comments from representatives of Saudi business as well as Indian business. Two agreements were also signed at the function.

That brings us to an end of what the official programmes have been today. This evening we will have some very important meetings with interaction between His Majesty the King and the Prime Minister, and we hope to be able to brief you shortly thereafter on those meetings as well.

That brings me to the end of what I have to say. I will be happy to take questions.

**Question:** What are the two agreements which have been signed at the business function?

**Secretary (East):** One is with Tatas on our side and the counterpart on the other; and the other is with the RITES I believe on our side, the Railways agency. But we will give you the exact details.

**Question:** What are the major issues discussed with Saudi side today and what are the agreements to be signed this evening?

**Secretary (East):** We will be signing some agreements on a Government-to-Government basis this evening, but I will give you the details after they have been signed this evening. I have already described what the major issues were, during my presentation.

**Question:** As far as this FTA is concerned, has any timeframe been fixed?

**Secretary (East):** No, and I do not believe it is possible to prejudge how an FTA is going to be negotiated. As you know, it is a complex and technical procedure. We would normally have teams of official negotiators from all the countries involved, in this case all the Gulf countries representing the countries of the GCC and from our side. Normally this is coordinated through our Commerce Ministry and the counterparts in the other Gulf countries. There would be first the framework agreement and then it is followed by agreement on the text, after which there would be a lot of technical material to be exchanged and agreed to, including lists of items to be put under the Free Trade Agreement. This usually does take some time.

**Question:** During the negotiations, has Saudi Arabia assured us anything concrete in terms of security concerns that we have in our neighbourhood?

**Secretary (East):** We have exchanged views on our respective security concerns in areas of interest and certainly both sides took note of each other's concerns.

**Question:** ... (Inaudible)... issues in the neighbourhood that you discussed with Saudis. Can you just elaborate on that?

**Secretary (East):** As you know, I believe that some of these issues are sensitive issues and these are discussed at a Government-to-Government level. When there are concrete developments and mechanisms set up, we would certainly make announcements. But at this stage it was more an exchange of views.

**Question:** There was also some talk about the Saudi Aramco company getting some space in the oil refinery that was to be set in Paradip in Orissa. Could you elaborate on that?

**Secretary (East):** I believe they have said that they are very interested in further exploring these possibilities both in the refinery area, as well as in joint ventures both in India as in Saudi Arabia. But Aramco, as you know, is also one of the largest suppliers to us of crude. They have indicated that they would be interested in investments covering the whole value chain.

**Question:** Could you share with us the Saudis' stand on Pakistani situation and Af-Pak Policy?

**Secretary (East):** I am afraid these were confidential discussions. These are not issues which I can divulge at this stage.

**Official Spokesperson:** Thank you.

**Source: Indian Embassy in Saudi Arabia, Riyadh**

[http://www.indianembassy.org.sa/press/Media%20Briefing%20by%20Secretary%20\(East\)%20in%20Riyadh%20-%2028%20February%202010.pdf](http://www.indianembassy.org.sa/press/Media%20Briefing%20by%20Secretary%20(East)%20in%20Riyadh%20-%2028%20February%202010.pdf)

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### **9. Naimi assures Deora to allocate 40 MMT crude oil for meeting increasing needs of India; EIL asked to open office in Riyadh, 28 February 2010**

The Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas Mr. Murli Deora held detailed discussions with Mr. Ali bin Ibrahim Al-Naimi, the Saudi Arabian Minister of Petroleum and Mineral Resources at Riyadh today. Mr. Deora pointed out that India looks for doubling of crude oil supply by Saudi Arabia as its three grass-root refinery projects at Bhatinda, Bina and Paradip near completion. Mr. Naimi assured to increase allocation of crude oil for supply to India from about 25.5 Million Metric Tons (MMT) per annum to about 40 MMT. He added that Saudi Arabia is geared to meet the needs of Indian companies including both public and private refiners.

Mr. Deora referred to greater possibility of cooperation and asked the Indian Oil PSUs led by Engineers India Ltd (EIL) to together open an Office at Riyadh. Mr. Naimi welcomed the suggestion. This, they felt, will facilitate higher cooperation in oil field related services and firm up projects with the local companies including with private companies. EIL conveyed its capability in non-ferrous minerals specially aluminium.

India also indicated sourcing heavier crude from Saudi Arabia. Responding to the proposal President of Saudi Aramco said that his company will look into the possibility. The discussions also focused on exchange of technical personnel between the two countries and on training in skill development in the oil and gas sector.

Oil Ministers of India and Saudi Arabia held wide ranging talks for increasing cooperation in the hydrocarbon sector on the occasion of the visit of Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh. Mr. Deora was accompanied by CMD, HPCL, Mr. Arun Balakrishnan, CMD, BPCL, Mr. Ashok Sinha, and CMD, EIL, Mr. A K Purwaha during the talks.

**Source: Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas Press Release, PIB**

<http://www.pib.nic.in/release/release.asp?relid=58610>

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## **10. Address by the Prime Minister of India, Dr. Manmohan Singh to the Majlis Al- Shura, 1 March 2010**

Your Excellency Dr. Abdullah bin Mohammed bin Ibrahim Al-Sheikh, Speaker of the Majlis Al-Shura,

Distinguished Members of the Majlis Al-Shura,

Distinguished Guests,

“I am deeply grateful and privileged to have this opportunity to address the Majlis Al-Shura. This august body has come to symbolize participative governance in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The Members of the Majlis Al-Shura have among them some of the best minds in the Kingdom, representing different segments of Saudi Arabia’s rich culture and society. I am, therefore, deeply conscious of the honour done to me and to India by inviting me to address this august House.

Saudi Arabia is the cradle of Islam and the land of the revelation of the Holy Quran. I have come to this ancient land with a message of peace, brotherhood and friendship. I bring to you the fraternal greetings of the people of India.

India regards Saudi Arabia as a pillar of stability in the Gulf region. Under the enlightened and sagacious leadership of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdul-Aziz Al-Saud, the Kingdom has taken rapid strides towards modernization. Its influence today extends far beyond the region.

As I stand before you, I am conscious of the wealth of history behind us, and the promise of a new partnership ahead of us.

We are two nations linked by the waterways of the Indian Ocean. Over 5,000 years ago, ships made with teak from Kerala freely traversed the waters of the Indian Ocean and linked the people of Sindh, Gujarat and Malabar with the different ports of the Gulf and the Red Sea, going up to Basra and Alexandria.

Commercial enterprises and exchange of foodstuffs and cloth for dates and pearls provided the basis for the development of deep people-to-people ties. Indian townships mushroomed across the Gulf. Arab traders established themselves along the coastline of western India. Our languages were influenced by each other. These linkages, over several centuries, have left an indelible mark upon our culture and civilization. This is reflected in the natural empathy and sense of comfort we have when we meet each other.

Islam qualitatively changed the character and personality of the people in Arabia as it enriched the lives of millions of Indians who embraced this new faith. It is said that during the reign of the Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan, Indian pilgrims constituted the largest movement of people by sea.

Muslim scholars went to Mecca in order to learn Islamic theology. Arab Muslim scholars came to India to learn mathematics, science, astronomy and philosophy. These exchanges led to the widespread diffusion of knowledge in the sciences, arts, religion and philosophy.

Today, Islam is an integral part of India's nationhood and ethos and of the rich tapestry of its culture. India has made significant contributions to all aspects of Islamic civilization. Centres of Islamic learning in India have made a seminal contribution to Islamic and Arabic studies.

Our 160 million Muslims are contributing to our nation building efforts and have excelled in all walks of life. We are proud of our composite culture and of our tradition of different faiths and communities living together in harmony.

The foundations of our relations in the modern era were laid during the visit of His Majesty King Saud to India in 1955 and Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru's visit to the Kingdom in 1956. These foundations were strengthened by the visit of Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi to Saudi Arabia in 1982.

The tone for our relations in the 21st century was set by the landmark visit to India of His Majesty King Abdullah in January 2006. The participation of His Majesty as the Chief Guest at our Republic Day celebrations was a matter of deep honour for the people of India.

The Delhi Declaration that I signed with the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques enshrines our shared vision for a new relationship. Our two countries pledged to work not just for the development and prosperity of our peoples but for the security and peace of the region as a whole.

My dialogue with His Majesty yesterday and my meetings with the other distinguished leaders of this great country have led to the reaffirmation of our close ties and our common interests.

We have agreed to impart a strategic character to our relations, and have put in place a roadmap for bilateral economic, political and security related cooperation that will constitute the core of our relationship in the coming years.

India is in the midst of rapid socio-economic transformation. Over the last five years, our economy has grown at an average annual rate of 9 percent. Despite the global economic slowdown, we hope to achieve a growth rate of about 7.5 percent in the current financial year.

In the next 25 years we aspire to growth rates of between 9 to 10 per cent annually. This will enable us to lift millions of our people out of poverty and to transform India into one of the largest economies of the world. India looks to the future with confidence and hope.

Saudi Arabia is itself witnessing remarkable progress as the vision of its leaders to modernize and diversify its economy becomes a reality.

There is vast potential for cooperation between our two countries based on our inherent strengths and complementarities.

We seek Saudi investment in a range of sectors from infrastructure and manufacturing to the services and hospitality sector. Equally, Indian industry is ready to take advantage of the many opportunities that are opening up in the IT, banking, telecommunications, pharmaceutical and hydrocarbon sectors in Saudi Arabia.

The Kingdom is one of India's major trading partners. Our bilateral trade has registered unprecedented growth in recent years and stood at over 25 billion US dollars in 2008-2009. We are looking at ways and means of expanding our traditionally strong collaboration in the energy sector.

Saudi Arabia is home to the largest Indian community abroad numbering about 1.8 million. Indian workers and professionals have participated in the extraordinary development of this region. Indeed, it would be difficult to identify a major project in this region with which Indians have not been involved in some way or the other.

As many as 165,000 Indian pilgrims perform *Hajj* annually. This is the second largest group from any single country. A similar number perform the *Umrah* annually. We are grateful for the warm welcome that the Kingdom has given to the Indian community and to our pilgrims.

We have noted the high priority given to the development of human resources in the future development of Saudi Arabia. This fits in with our priority as well. We would like to see more contacts among our parliamentarians, scholars, scientists and students to renew the intellectual bonds between India and West Asia.

In addition to these areas of cooperation, there is scope for considerable expansion of our interactions in the political, defence and security spheres.

West Asia is a vital part of India's extended neighbourhood. We have deep and intricate ties with the Gulf countries. We have a high stake in the peace and stability of the region. Neither the countries of the region nor the world can afford fresh turmoil. We sincerely hope that wisdom will prevail and that in the resolution of conflicts and differences, dialogue will triumph over confrontation.

There is no issue more important for peace and stability in the region than the question of Palestine. For far too long the brave people of Palestine have been denied their just, legitimate and inalienable rights, including most of all the establishment of a sovereign, independent and viable Palestinian state. I wish to pay a special tribute to His Majesty for the initiatives he has taken to bring about a just settlement. We applaud and support the Arab Peace Initiative.

I take this opportunity of reiterating the principled, strong and consistent support of the government and people of India for the struggle of the Palestinian people. India has been making a contribution to the development of the Palestinian economy and its human resources and we will continue to do so.

Both our countries are today threatened by extremism and violence. The pursuit of terror in the name of religion or any other cause or grievance cannot be acceptable to civilized societies. It has no sanction in any religion. History teaches us that the scourge of terrorism must be confronted with determination and united effort.

Nowhere is this challenge greater than in Afghanistan. The people of Afghanistan have suffered for far too long. They deserve an atmosphere of peace and the opportunity to pursue a life of dignity and hope.

The government of Afghanistan needs the support of the international community in restoring peace and development in the country. The international community should support all sections of Afghan society who wish to work towards the emergence of Afghanistan as a modern, stable and sovereign nation. No sanctuary should be given to those who promote terror, violence or instability in the country.

India wishes to live in peace and friendship with its neighbours. I believe that all countries of South Asia should work to realize a common vision of peace and inclusive development for the region.

We seek cooperative relations with Pakistan. Our objective is a permanent peace because we recognize that we are bound together by a shared future. If there is cooperation between India and Pakistan, vast opportunities will open up for trade, travel and development that will create prosperity in both countries and in South Asia as a whole. But to realize this vision, Pakistan must act decisively against terrorism. If Pakistan cooperates with India, there is no problem that we cannot solve and we can walk the extra mile to open a new chapter in relations between our two countries.

We live in a world where the interests of peoples and countries are intertwined. As two countries representing old civilizations, India and Saudi Arabia should work together to promote dialogue and peaceful co-existence among nations, religions and societies. We should work together as partners in shaping the global discourse on issues such as energy security, food security, climate change and terrorism. We should cooperate to deal with regional challenges such as maritime security, piracy, narcotics, human trafficking and other non-traditional threats to security.

The Kingdom and the region are blessed with the benevolence and statesmanship of His Majesty King Abdullah. Our two peoples are desirous of peace and goodwill. Together, India and Saudi Arabia can become a potent moral force for a better world and for a more secure future for our children.

I thank you for your attention.”

**Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi**

<http://meaindia.nic.in/speech/2010/03/01js01.htm>

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## **11. Riyadh Declaration: A New Era of Strategic Partnership, 1 March 2010**

At the invitation of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdul-Aziz Al Saud, the Prime Minister of the Republic of India, His Excellency Dr. Manmohan Singh paid an official visit to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia from 13-15/3/1431H corresponding to February 27 – March 1, 2010.

During the visit, the Prime Minister of India addressed the Majlis Al-Shura, and received the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Petroleum and Mineral Resources and Commerce and Industry. An honorary doctorate was conferred upon the Prime Minister by King Saud University.

The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdul-Aziz Al Saud and the Prime Minister of India, Dr. Manmohan Singh held in depth discussions on a wide range of issues in an atmosphere of utmost warmth, cordiality, friendship and transparency. They asserted that strong bilateral ties between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Republic of India were to the benefit of their peoples and of all humanity.

The two leaders were unanimous that the visit of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdul-Aziz Al Saud to India in 2006, and the current visit of the Prime Minister of India, Dr. Manmohan Singh to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia heralded a new era in Saudi-India relations, that is in keeping with the changing realities and unfolding opportunities of the 21st century. This would be in accordance with the civilizational, historic and cultural links which bind them and their regions.

The two leaders reviewed the status of implementation of the historic Delhi Declaration signed on 27/12/1426H corresponding to 27 January 2006, and expressed their satisfaction at the steady expansion of Saudi-India relations since the signing of the Delhi Declaration. They re-emphasized the importance of full implementation of the Delhi Declaration through exchange of visits at the ministerial, official, business, academia, media and other levels.

Keeping in view the development of relations between the two countries, and the potential for their further growth, the two leaders decided to raise their cooperation to a strategic partnership covering security, economic, defence and political areas.

The two leaders reiterated their mutual desire to develop as knowledge-based economies based on advances in the areas of information technology, space science and other frontier technologies. They welcomed the agreements signed between the two sides in the field of Research and Education, Information Technology and Services, Science and Technology, and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space.

Both leaders emphasized the importance of developing a broad-based economic partnership that reflects the ongoing transformation of their economies, and the changes such transformation are bringing about in the global economic order, including continuous coordination within the framework of the G-20 process. They welcomed the outcome of the 8th Session of the Joint Commission for Economic, Trade, Scientific, Technical and Cultural Cooperation held in Riyadh in October, 2009.

The two leaders stressed on continuing to work towards strengthening their strategic partnership by meeting the two countries' vast requirements relating to infrastructure, energy and development, by augmenting the flow of their investments into each other's countries, and enhancing the bilateral trade in accordance with the potential and size of their economies. In this regard, the two leaders invited the private sector in the two countries and the Saudi – India Business Council to increase their efforts to take advantage of the investment opportunities provided by the two countries.

The two leaders further emphasized the importance of strengthening the strategic energy partnership based on complementarity and interdependence, as outlined in the Delhi Declaration, including meeting India's increasing requirement of crude oil supplies, and identifying and implementing specific projects for cooperation including in the areas of new and renewable energy. India invited Saudi Arabia to participate in crude storage facilities in India. They directed the Joint Working Group on Energy to continue adopting all appropriate means to achieve the same.

The two leaders agreed on the role and importance of the youth in consolidating and strengthening the relations between their peoples, and directed the concerned authorities to prepare necessary programmes for activating this role in the framework of Memorandum of Cooperation in the educational field signed between the two countries in 2006, and also providing all necessary facilities to their students studying in both countries.

The two leaders mandated the Saudi-India Joint Commission to continue follow up of the implementation of this Declaration to build this strategic partnership.

The Prime Minister of India expressed his gratitude and appreciation for the excellent efforts made and services provided by the Saudi authorities to the *Hajj* and *Umrah* pilgrims from India.

The two leaders welcomed the level of existing cooperation in defence fields between the concerned authorities in the two countries, and agreed to continue strengthening this cooperation in a way that realizes their common interests.

The two leaders noted that tolerance, religious harmony and brotherhood, irrespective of faith or ethnic background, were part of the principles and values of both countries. These are the same principles advocated by the initiative of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques for dialogue among different faiths and beliefs.

The two leaders renewed condemnation of the phenomena of terrorism, extremism and violence affirming that it is global and threatens all societies and is not linked to any race, colour or belief. The international community must, therefore, resolutely combat terrorism. The two sides agreed to enhance cooperation in exchange of information relating to terrorist activities, money laundering, narcotics, arms and human trafficking, and develop joint strategies to combat these threats. They welcomed the signing of the Extradition Treaty and the Agreement for Transfer of Sentenced Persons.

In the course of discussions on regional and international issues, the peace process in the Middle East was high on the agenda. The two leaders reviewed ongoing efforts and the latest developments, and expressed hope for the early resumption of the peace process in accordance with the UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, and the Arab Peace Plan with a view to address all the key issues of the dispute comprehensively and within a definite timeframe leading to the establishment of a sovereign, independent, united and viable Palestinian State, in accordance with the two state solution.

The two leaders emphasized that continued building of settlements by Israel constitutes a fundamental stumbling block for the peace process.

The two leaders emphasized the importance of regional and international efforts focusing on making the Middle East and Gulf Region free of all nuclear weapons and all weapons of mass destruction.

The two leaders reiterated their support for ongoing international efforts to resolve the issues relating to Iran's nuclear programme peacefully through dialogue and called for continuation of these efforts. They encouraged Iran to respond to those efforts in order to remove regional and international doubts about its nuclear programme, especially as these ensure the right of Iran and other countries to peaceful uses of nuclear energy according to the yardsticks and procedures of International Atomic Energy Agency and under its supervision.

The two leaders discussed the situation in Afghanistan and called for the preservation of Afghanistan's sovereignty and independence. They expressed their full support for the efforts aimed at helping Afghanistan to develop its infrastructure and achieve social and economic development. They supported the efforts of the people of Afghanistan to achieve stability and



security, protected from exploitation by the terrorist organizations, while upholding the values and principles of the Constitution of Afghanistan.

The two leaders discussed the situation in Iraq and expressed hope that the forthcoming elections will enable the people of Iraq to realize their aspirations by achieving security and stability, strengthening territorial integrity and consolidating its national unity on the principle of equality of rights and obligations among all Iraqis irrespective of their faith and sect.

The Prime Minister of India conveyed his deep gratitude and appreciation to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques for the warm and gracious hospitality extended to him and the members of his delegation during his official visit to the Kingdom.

Signed this Sunday, February 28, 2010 (14 Rabea Alawal, 1431H) in Riyadh.

**Dr. Manmohan Singh**  
Prime Minister of the  
Republic of India

**Abdullah bin Abdul-Aziz Al Saud**  
King of the Kingdom  
of Saudi Arabia

**Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi**

<http://meaindia.nic.in/pressrelease/2010/03/01pr01.htm>

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## **12. Address by Prime Minister at the King Saud University, 1 March 2010**

Your Excellency Dr. Khalid Mohammad Al Angari, Minister for Higher Education, Dr. Abdullah Abdul Rahman Al Othman, Rector of King Saud University, Members of the Faculty, Students, Ladies and Gentlemen.

I am greatly honoured to address this distinguished gathering at the prestigious King Saud University. I recall my days as a university professor very fondly not least because of the opportunity it gave me to interact with inspiring young minds.

I wish to convey my deep appreciation to the King Saud University for conferring an Honorary Doctorate on me. I consider this as an exceptional honour bestowed on me by one of the premier centres of learning in the Arab world.

The University has been in the forefront of building a knowledge society. Its contribution in promoting fundamental human values, academic freedom, learning and innovation has been second to none.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

The Arab world has a long intellectual and educational tradition. History tells us that the Arabs translated and preserved teachings from Greece, India and Persia. It is these texts that inspired a mass movement in the field of education during the 12th century which produced great Arab mathematicians, scientists and scholars.

India's links with Saudi Arabia and the region go back several millennia. There were regular intellectual exchanges in various fields of human study. These linkages influenced our traditions of learning. Over the years, however, these links weakened and we need to revive such exchanges. The confluence of Arab and Asian ideas and culture will help us to rediscover each other and in the process enrich human civilization.

I am aware of the strong interest of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdul-Aziz Al Saud in the modernization of education infrastructure. We admire his vision for the development of human capital and for promoting a scientific temper among the youth while preserving cultural traditions.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

We have a similar vision for the development of education in our own country. Like Saudi Arabia, we too recognize the importance of education in social empowerment and progress. Almost 20 per cent of the total expenditure of our current five year development Plan is earmarked for education. We are establishing 30 new Central Universities, of which half will be conceived as world-class institutions. We have laid equal emphasis on the development of our infrastructure for science and technology education. We have plans to build five more national institutes of science and more Indian Institutes of Technology and Indian Institutes of Information Technology.

We are keen to build our human resources for the next generation. Every year India produces among the largest number of scientists and engineers in the world. We wish to expand India's knowledge economy and to build world class facilities for research and cutting edge science in the country.

I am happy that India and Saudi Arabia are seeking closer cooperation in the field of higher education. We signed a bilateral agreement for educational cooperation in 2006.

Yesterday His Majesty and I signed the Riyadh Declaration. In this Declaration we have paid special emphasis on the increasing role and importance of youth in consolidating relations between our two countries. We also reaffirmed our common desire to forge greater cooperation in the areas of education, culture, information technology and frontier areas of science and technology.

We would like to see greater number of students in our universities from Saudi Arabia. We are already receiving Saudi students under the prestigious “King Abdullah Scholarship Programme”. These kinds of programmes should be expanded and popularized.

I am happy that the King Saud University has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with one of the most prestigious institutions in India, the Indian Institute of Science. I hope that this will inspire similar collaborations between other centres of excellence in both countries.

I see many possibilities for cooperation in the area of human capital formation and skill development. We are both countries with young populations and our educational system should be geared to making every student employable. The knowledge economy offers many opportunities for creative young minds and we should collaborate in nurturing them.

I once again thank you for conferring this honour on me. I am continually inspired by the creativity, energy and dynamism of the younger generation. I wish all the students gathered here today good luck and continued success in the noble task of building this great country.

Thank you.

**Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi**

<http://meaindia.nic.in/speech/2010/03/01ss02.htm>

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### **13. PM's Speech to the Indian Community, 1 March 2010**

I am delighted to have this opportunity to meet you all today. You represent a microcosm of the 1.8 million Indians in Saudi Arabia. To each and every one of them who are not present today, in Jeddah or Dammam, Mecca or Medina, I convey my greetings. I would like them to know that India is proud of them and their achievements.

During my stay in the Kingdom, I have heard universal praise from the Saudi leadership about your contribution to the economic, social and technological progress of Saudi Arabia. There is hardly a major project in Saudi Arabia or for that matter in the entire Gulf region that has not seen a contribution of some kind by Indian professionals and workers.

This is a matter of pride for you, but it is also something which makes all of India proud.

I heartily congratulate you and your families for your remarkable successes.

The fact that Indians are the largest overseas community in Saudi Arabia is proof of the respect you have earned. It shows the confidence the Government and people of Saudi Arabia have in your work.

The reasons for this go beyond the fact that the Indian community is well educated, hard-working and honest. What is special and unique are the values that every Indian stands for. These values are the product of a 5000 year old civilization and each Indian is proud of them.

An Indian, more than anyone else, knows the meaning of respecting the other's beliefs, customs and faiths. Pluralism and diversity are second nature to us. All this makes us tolerant and naturally inclined to harmonious and peaceful co-existence. I have no doubt that you reflect these lofty values in your workplaces, in your homes and in your social interactions.

I am only the third Indian Prime Minister to visit the Kingdom. Yet, I feel the same way as His Majesty King Abdullah felt when he was in India four years ago – that I have come to my second home. During my stay, I have seen enormous goodwill and warmth for India.

Our relations with the Kingdom go back several millennia. We have influenced each other in all aspects of daily life. We belong to the same extended neighbourhood. Today Saudi Arabia is a principal source of our energy requirements. It is home to our largest overseas community, and several thousands of our pilgrims come for the *Hajj* and *Umrah* every year. Our ties are therefore extremely important and of regional and global significance.

During our discussions, His Majesty King Abdullah and I have decided to impart a strategic character to our relations.

We have agreed to build a meaningful and substantive partnership and to expand our cooperation in all fields. I have no doubt that the fruits of this will be felt in the coming years.

Our government has taken a conscious decision to strengthen India's relations with the entire Gulf region. This is a region with huge potential. Prosperity and stability in this part of the world has opened vast opportunities for Indian experts, professionals and workers. Indian companies are investing in the region, and contributing to its economic development. We also welcome Saudi investments into India, and will actively encourage it.

We are extremely happy that many Saudi students are coming to India for education under the King Abdullah Scholarship Programme.

India is opening up to the rest of the world. Despite the global economic slowdown, our economy will grow at 7.5 per cent this year. But this is not enough, and we aim much higher. There is a new dynamism within the country and there is a common belief that the future belongs to India. Our Government is investing heavily in the infrastructure, education, health and agriculture sectors to reach the benefits of growth to all sections of society. The contribution you are making by way of remittances worth several billions of dollars is fuelling the resurgence of India.

Like any other country, India also faces challenges. But we are equipped to deal with them. We will not allow the forces of extremism and terrorism to disrupt the fabric of our society. Secularism and respect for all religions and faiths is the bedrock of our Constitution. We will protect the rights of all segments of our society.

I am aware of some of the difficulties you face here. I want to assure you that your welfare and well-being is a matter of high priority for our government. The Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs was created specifically to focus on these issues. A number of steps have been taken in the last five years for the welfare of our overseas communities.

Our Embassy and our Consulate in Jeddah are working proactively to respond promptly and sympathetically to the concerns of the community, particularly the most vulnerable among them. Complaints received from workers are taken up with sponsors, and, whenever necessary, with the Saudi authorities.

An Indian Community Welfare Fund has been set up in November 2009. We are in regular contact with the Saudi authorities to ensure that redressal mechanisms function well and are effective. I however recognize that there is always scope for improvement. I assure you that we will give most serious consideration to any suggestions you may have. I invite you to come forward with your ideas and proposals.

I am returning back to India confident that our relations with Saudi Arabia have been placed on a sound footing.

I wish you all even greater success, prosperity and fulfilment.

Thank you.

**Source: The Office of the Prime Minister of India, New Delhi**

<http://pmindia.nic.in/speech/content.asp?id=896>

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#### **14. Transcript of PM's onboard interaction with Media during return from Riyadh, 1 March 2010**

**Prime Minister:** Dear friends, I just had a very productive and fruitful visit to Saudi Arabia. I have met all the top leaders starting with His Majesty King Abdullah, the Foreign Minister, the Oil and Minerals Minister, Commerce and Industry Minister. As a result of our interactions, we have agreed to upgrade the quality of our relationship to that of a strategic partnership and this strategic partnership will cover economic, trade and investment issues. Also it will include issues

relating to energy security, investments in each other's country in upstream and downstream energy activities, investment in R&D in renewable energy resources and also it will cover issues relating to security cooperation in dealing with terrorism, strengthening arrangements for provision of information and intelligence.

...

**Question:** Now Saudi Arabia is also a victim of terrorism, and what is your assessment. Are the Saudis ready to support the Afghan issue, the Af-pak question and our problem, to help with Pakistan?

**Answer:** My feeling is the Saudi Arabian leadership has a better understanding of the predicament that we face both in Pakistan and in Afghanistan. (Interruption....inaudible) Well I can't say that but there is great deal of sympathy and support for India's point of view, that what we are asking is very reasonable.

...

**Question:** One of the major problems which Indian community is facing in Saudi Arabia is labour issues. Any positive development in this regard?

**Answer:** Well at various levels, we have hinted at those issues, let me say that at all levels in the Kingdom, right from his Majesty to the various Ministers that I talked to, they showed great appreciation of the working of the Indian community. They described it as a honest community, a hard working community. So the Kingdom is very happy with the large presence of 1.8 million Indian citizens. There are of course problems, which our Embassy is there to address, and I am hoping that as a result of my visit, we have created an environment whereby when some representations have to be made to the Saudi authorities, they may take a more liberal view of the problems of the Indian workers. I have been successful in creating a climate of opinion to that direction.

**Question:** Given the primacy of place Saudi Arabia has with Pakistan, and given the fact that we are now in a strategic relationship with Saudi Arabia, do you think Saudi Arabia can be a credible interlocutor for some of the issues that we have with Pakistan?

**Answer:** Well I know Saudi Arabia has close relations with Pakistan. I did discuss the Indo-Pak relations with His Majesty on a one-to-one basis. I explained to him the role that terrorism, aided, abetted and inspired by Pakistan is playing in our country. And I did not ask for him to do anything other than to use his good offices to persuade Pakistan to desist from this path.

**Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi**

<http://meaindia.nic.in/pressbriefing/2010/03/01pb01.htm>

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**15. Suo Moto Statement by Mr. S. M. Krishna, External Affairs Minister, in Parliament on “Prime Minister’s Visit to Saudi Arabia”, 4 March 2010**

I rise to inform this august House about the historic visit of the Hon’ble Prime Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia from February 27 to March 1, 2010 at the invitation of His Majesty King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz Al-Saud.

2. The Prime Minister’s visit to Saudi Arabia took place 28 years after the last visit by an Indian Prime Minister, that of late Mrs. Indira Gandhi in 1982. Prime Minister was accompanied by a high-powered delegation consisting of Ministers of Health and Family Welfare, Petroleum and Natural Gas, Commerce and Industry and the Minister of State for External Affairs apart from senior officials.

3. Prime Minister was accorded an exceptionally warm welcome by the Saudi leadership. In a departure from protocol, the Prime Minister was received at the airport by His Royal Highness Crown Prince Sultan bin Abdul Aziz, the Minister of Defence and Aviation, Crown Prince Naif Bin Abdul Aziz, Second Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister, Crown Prince Salman bin Abdul Aziz, Governor of Riyadh and members of the Saudi Cabinet. Prior to his talks with His Majesty King Abdullah a ceremonial arrival with an impressive Guard of Honour was held at His Majesty’s presidential Palace which is a rare honour. All these gestures reflected the special significance attached to the Prime Minister’s visit by the highest levels of the Saudi leadership.

4. The Prime Minister’s visit took place after the visit of His Majesty King Abdullah to India as Chief Guest at our Republic Day celebrations in 2006, when the Delhi Declaration was signed by both leaders.

5. The Hon’ble Prime Minister’s visit provided an opportunity for the two leaders to review the progress in bilateral relations in recent years and in particular the implementation of the Delhi Declaration. They also discussed regional and global issues of mutual interest.

6. Saudi Arabia is an important country and a factor of stability in the region. It is the largest country and economy in the GCC. Economic ties constitute a solid foundation of our relations. Our bilateral trade has seen exponential growth exceeding US\$ 25 billion in 2008-09. Saudi Arabia is a reliable, valuable and major supplier of crude oil to India. We import about 20 per cent of our energy requirements from Saudi Arabia which may be further increased over time to meet our energy and development needs. We have been assured of continued Saudi understanding and support in this regard.

7. The most important outcome of the visit was the signing of the historic Riyadh Declaration by the Prime Minister and His Majesty King Abdullah, in which India and Saudi Arabia decided to



raise our cooperation to a strategic partnership covering security, economic, defence and political areas. In particular, both leaders emphasized the importance of strengthening the strategic energy partnership. It was also agreed that both sides would work towards meeting their vast requirements relating to infrastructure and development by augmenting the flow of investments into each other's countries.

8. The two leaders renewed their condemnation of the phenomena of terrorism, extremism and violence, affirming that it is global and threatens all societies and is not linked to any race, colour or belief. The international community must, therefore, resolutely combat terrorism. The two sides agreed to enhance cooperation in exchange of information relating to terrorist activities, money laundering, narcotics, arms and human trafficking, and develop joint strategies to combat these threats.

9. The Prime Minister conveyed our gratitude to the Saudi leadership for the arrangements made for *Hajj* and *Umrah* pilgrims from India.

10. In addition, the following Agreements and MoUs were signed:

- i) Extradition Treaty;
- ii) Agreement for Transfer of Sentenced Persons;
- iii) Memorandum of Understanding between the Indian Space Research Organisation and the King Abdul Aziz City for Science and Technology for cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space;
- iv) Agreement on scientific and technological cooperation between the Department of Science and Technology and the King Abdul Aziz City for Science and Technology in Saudi Arabia; and
- v) A MOU on Cultural Cooperation between the respective Ministries of Culture.

11. Several other Agreements in the business, trade, research and education, media and information technology sectors were signed on the sidelines of the visit.

12. As a special gesture, the Prime Minister was invited to address the Majlis Al Shura in Saudi Arabia. The prestigious Government University, the King Saud University, conferred an Honorary Doctorate on the Hon'ble Prime Minister.

13. A high powered CEOs delegation also accompanied the Prime Minister. They had productive interactions with their Saudi counterparts. There was significant interest in directing Saudi investible surpluses to our infrastructure sector and other mutually beneficial projects. The Prime Minister addressed captains of the Saudi business and industry.

14. The Prime Minister also interacted with a cross-section of the Indian community in Saudi Arabia, which numbers nearly 1.8 million and is the single largest population of Indian passport holders outside India. The Prime Minister applauded their hard work and assured them that their welfare was of paramount concern to us. The Saudi leadership expressed their deep appreciation for the contribution of the Indian community to the development of the Saudi economy.

15. The visit of the Hon'ble Prime Minister was highly successful and has underscored the mutual desire of both countries to take our bilateral relation to a higher level.

**Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi**

<http://meaindia.nic.in/speech/2010/03/04ss01.htm>

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The views expressed here are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views/positions of the MEI@ND.

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