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India and Israel to step-up Science and Technology Cooperation

A high level Israeli delegation led by Minister for Science, Technology and Space Mr. Ofir Akunis, including three members of Israeli parliament met Dr. Harsh Vardhan, Union Minister for Science, Technology and Earth Sciences. The visit of the Israeli S&T and Space Minister to India follows the visit of the President of Israel to India last month. In the meeting between the two Ministers both sides agreed to give boost to the bilateral cooperation in science and technology under the aegis of the S&T Agreement concluded between India and Israel in 1993. Next year will mark 25 years of diplomatic relationship between the two countries.

Welcoming the delegation, Dr. Harsh Vardhan remarked that India values its science and technology cooperation with Israel which is a leading innovative nation of the world. He further added that we would like to identify new opportunities and mechanisms to expand and upscale our cooperation agenda by creating a value based relationship which can contribute to the 21st century knowledge economy.

India and Israel together have implemented a large number of cutting edge research projects in applied areas covering Agricultural and Medical Biotechnology; Human Genomics; Advanced Materials & Nanotechnology; Imaging Sensor & Robotics; Solar Energy; Communication & Information Technology; and Lasers & Electro-optics. This has led to new knowledge creation through high impact publications in peer reviewed international journals.

As a follow-up to the India-Israel Joint S&T Committee meeting which was held in Jerusalem earlier this year, the two Ministers agreed to step up the collaboration in the next two years by providing U.S. dollar 1 million from each side to support new R&D projects in the cutting edge areas of 'Big Data Analytics in Health Care' and 'Security in Cyber Space'. The joint projects will be awarded to the partnering academic and R&D laboratories from the two countries during the next year. As a part of these projects, student exchanges will be encouraged in order to connect the next generation and sustain the pipeline of future collaboration.

In recognition of the importance of promoting women in science it was agreed to consider special initiatives to support women in science and technology through new joint programs in this area. Further, in order to engage best and bright researchers from India and Israel who can provide the future excitement in the science and technology relationship, it was suggested to hold 'Frontiers of Science and Engineering Symposium' targeted to the next generation future leaders, cutting across disciplinary and institutional boundaries.

The potential avenues and mechanism for collaboration particularly leading to establishment of 'Networked Research Centers' between the academic and R&D institutions from the two countries was also mooted. The

virtual networked centre mechanism will help to leverage collaborative advantage by connecting the best performing research groups. To this effect, a joint declaration of intent was signed by the two Ministers for further follow-up.

The science and technology relationship between India and Israel has been unique in also promoting industrial R&D cooperation through academia-industry participation which has the potential to create new intellectual property, prototypes and products. This collaborative program is particularly significant in context to the Make in India and other national missions of the Indian government. The international industrial R&D cooperation of Department of Science & Technology (DST) with MATIMOP, the Israeli Industry Center for R&D, is administered through the Global Innovation and Technology Alliance (GITA) - platform of Confederation of Indian Industry(CII).

Dr. Harsh Vardhan remarked that by connecting the academic institutions and industries from both countries we will not only stimulate new knowledge creation but also foster innovation and techno-entrepreneurship. Both countries should continue their commitment to further strengthen this strand of our bilateral S&T cooperation which is of mutual relevance and in line with our national priority.

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