



## Ministry of External Affairs

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# Media Interaction by President upon the conclusion of his State Visit to Jordan, Palestine and Israel en route from Tel Aviv to New Delhi (October 15, 2015)

October 16, 2015

I have just concluded successful state visits to Jordan, Palestine and Israel from October 10-15, 2015. My delegation included Shri Thaawar Chand Gehlot, Minister for Social Justice & Empowerment and six Members of Parliament representing major political parties, namely, Prof. K.V. Thomas, Ms. Meenakshi Lekhi, Dr. Subhash Ramrao Bhamre, Shri Prathap Simha, Shri Vinod Chavda and Dr. Anupam Hazra. Senior officials of Rashtrapathi Bhavan, MEA, MHRD, Vice Chancellors of JNU and Jamia Millia Islamia, Director, IIT Kharagpur and Director, Cluster Innovation Centre, Delhi University were also part of my delegation.

My visits to Jordan, Palestine and Israel were first ever visits by an Indian President. They reflect the importance that India places on enhancing our partnership with countries of this region, which is our extended neighbourhood. I took the opportunity to brief the leaderships of these countries on the initiatives of our Government in various fields and to explore possibilities of enhanced cooperation in bilateral, regional and international context.

### Jordan

India has close, warm and cordial relations with Jordan. We admire the leadership of His Majesties Late King Hussein and King Abdullah II that has ensured Jordan's continued progress despite many challenges. During the visit, I held meetings with His Majesty King Abdullah II and Prime Minister Abdullah Ensour of Jordan. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Nasser S. Judeh called on me. We discussed the entire gamut of bilateral relations and regional and international issues of mutual concern. In all my meetings, I found a significant convergence of mutual interests and a genuine deep-seated desire for closer cooperation.

We explored possibilities of opening up new synergies in different areas of mutual interest including counter terrorism, defence, IT, and energy. HM King Abdullah II expressed his keen desire to encourage Indian companies to work with the Jordanian ICT companies. 16 MoUs and Agreements, including between academic institutions were finalised. A major avenue in Amman was named after Mahatma

Gandhi during my visit.

King Abdullah II supported India's candidature to permanent membership of an expanded UN Security Council and the ongoing UN reform process. King Abdullah II and I inaugurated a US\$ 860 million project of Jordan-India Fertilizer Co., a joint venture between IFFCO and the Jordan Phosphate Mines Company to produce phosphoric acid for export to India. In response to my appeal, King Abdullah II expressed willingness to enter into long-term arrangements for supply of phosphates to India from Jordan and as well as establish more JVs to meet demand of phosphoric acid, rock phosphate and DAP. I announced a Line of Credit of US \$ 100 million to Jordan as Project Assistance and increase of the number of ITEC slots from 30 to 50. I invited their Majesties King Abdullah and Queen Rania to pay a State visit to India at the earliest opportunity, which was accepted graciously.

## Palestine

In Palestine, I was received with great warmth and affection by President Mahmoud Abbas, Prime Minister Dr. Rami Hamdallah and leaders of major political parties. President Abbas briefed me about the evolving situation in Israel-Palestine relations and emphasised that they were seeking a peaceful resolution of the Palestinian issue.

I reiterated India's principled support to the Palestinian cause and called for a negotiated solution resulting in a sovereign, independent, viable and united State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living within secure and recognized borders, side by side at peace with Israel as endorsed in the Quartet Roadmap and relevant UNSC Resolutions.

President Abbas appreciated our support and thanked me profusely for staying overnight in Ramallah, being the first Head of State from any country to do so. He respectfully described us as 'brothers' and not just friends. He assured me that they were seekers of peace following in the footsteps of Mahatma Gandhi. He conveyed his conviction that non-violence is the only way for Palestine to realize its dream of an independent Palestinian State.

I announced increase of ICCR scholarships from 10 to 25 per annum, and ITEC slots from 50 to 100 for Palestine. We handed over a cheque worth US\$ 5 million as a budgetary support to the Palestinian authority.

I paid floral tributes at the bust of Mahatma Gandhi placed at the Garden of Nations in Ramallah and inaugurated along with President Abbas a roundabout named 'Maidan Al Hind'. I paid tributes at the Mausoleum of Yasser Arafat, who was a good friend of India and whom I had met personally on several occasions. I inaugurated the India-Palestine Center for Excellence in ICT in the Al Quds University and announced India's decision to build one more India-Palestine Center for Excellence in ICT in Gaza with similar aims and objectives at an estimated cost of US\$ 1 million. I announced Government of India's decision to set up an IT park in Ramallah at an estimated cost of US\$ 12 million and a Palestinian Institute of Diplomacy at an estimated cost of US\$ 4.5 million.

The India-Palestine Higher Education Roundtable was held between premier institutions of our two

countries and establishment of an Indian Chair in Al Quds University announced. In all, six MOUs and Agreements were signed during the visit. I invited President Abbas to visit India and he assured me of doing so at an early date.

## Israel

In Israel, I was received with great warmth and friendship by President Reuven Rivlin, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Speaker of Knesset Yuli-Yoel Edelstein. We reviewed our multidimensional relations and explored ways and means to enhance them for the mutual benefit of our two countries. I was deeply honoured to be invited to address the Knesset and touched by the enthusiasm I found amongst Members of Parliament for better relations with India. I along with our Members of Parliament had a detailed interaction with Leader of the Opposition Isaac Herzog and his colleagues.

I visited Mt. Herzl and paid my respects to the victims of the Holocaust at the Yad Vashem, the World Centre for Holocaust Research, where I was accompanied by President Rivlin. I also placed a wreath at the tomb of Theodor Herzl.

I described Israel as one of the most important countries for India and conveyed the need for our two countries to reinvigorate bilateral ties in all areas of our engagement. Israel has provided defence equipment, platforms and systems at a time when India needed them the most. We discussed the need to expand cooperation in solar energy, dairy development, water management, horticulture, animal husbandry and agriculture as well as cooperation between Indian Space Research Organization and Israeli Space Agency. PM Netanyahu and I discussed new possibilities and synergies to diversify our trade as well as mutual investments. I informed the Israeli leadership about various initiatives taken by the Government of India like 'Make in India', 'Digital India', 'Clean Ganga', 'Smart Cities', 'Start-up India', etc. and invited investment as well as participation by Israeli companies.

I invited President Rivlin and Prime Minister Netanyahu to visit India. President Rivlin accepted my invitation and confirmed his intention to do so at an early date. I also invited Israeli Parliamentarians to come to India and engage with their Indian counterparts.

Nobel Prize winner and former Israeli President as well as Prime Minister, Shimon Peres called on me as an old friend. He described my visit as one carrying hope and peace. He said India with its democracy and multi cultural society is a model to Israel and all other countries.

Two agreements were signed between the Governments. Eight MoUs exchanged between the educational institutions of India and Israel. These will promote cooperation in the field of higher education between the two countries and provide for joint research, exchange of scholars, etc.

In public remarks, I expressed distress at recent incidents of violence, condemned all forms of terrorism and called for peaceful resolution of all disputes.

Honorary Doctrates were conferred by leading Universities of all three countries, the University of Jordan, the Al Quds University and the Hebrew University upon me, which I accepted in humility as symbol of

their friendship and regard for India. I also addressed the Indian community as well as friends of India in Amman as well as Jerusalem.

I thank my hosts in Jordan, Palestine and Israel for the warm hospitality extended to me and my delegation. These visits have helped deepen our mutually beneficial relations. I return with the conviction that the governments of all the three countries are keen to take relations with India to much higher levels. India will actively work towards enhancing our partnership with Jordan, Palestine and Israel in the days to come.

### Questions & Answers

**Question:** Sir, yesterday during your meeting with Israeli Leader of Opposition, you said that there cannot be a State on the basis of religion. My question to you is, but is not Israel like Pakistan also based on religion?

**Hon. President:** I said that religion cannot be the basis of State. For example, in large number of Arab countries Islam is the religion; but on the basis of religion all Arab countries have not converged into one State. Pakistan was created out of India on the basis of religion in 1947. A large chunk came out of Pakistan and became an independent sovereign State within 25 years. That is the point which I explained to the Leader of Opposition and other Members of Israeli Parliament.

**Question:** Sir, aapka yeh daura teen deshon ka us daur mein hua hai jab in deshon ke beech mein aantarik dvandva abhi tezi se badh raha hai. Bharat ise kis roop mein dekhta hai kyon ki Bharat ne teenon ke aapasi sambandhon ko le kar koi tippani nahin ki hai? **Hon. President:** I know that different countries have different relations. It is not the job of other country to make any comment on it. This is international diplomacy and courtesy.

**Question:** Sir, before your visit, in your interview to a Jordan newspaper you had agreed with King Abdullah that the world is almost at the threshold of a third world war. After visiting these three countries, now what would be your assessment on what you said in your interview?

**Hon. President:** That is his perception and he wanted to indicate that terrorism has emerged as one of the major problems and disturbing and destabilizing factors in the international arena.

**Question:** Israel aur Filisteen ke sambandhon ko balance karke Bharat kaise aage kaise le ja sakta hai?

**Hon. President:** Almost 25 years ago, exactly not 25 years but 23 years ago we established full-fledged diplomatic relationship with Israel and we are maintaining our stated principled position of our relation with Palestine. Therefore, this job the Government of India is doing for more than last two and a half decades.

**Question:** Now that you have visited both the countries - Israel and Palestine - and you have talked to both the leaderships, what impression have you got? Is there any possibility of conflict resolution in the near future or is it farfetched?

**Hon. President:** In my conversation with the leadership of both the countries it appears, so far as I sense,

that there is a desire to resolve the issue peacefully; and that is the sense I had.

**Question:** In your talks with the King of Jordan you had mentioned about the difficulty of Indian labour getting work permits and getting to work in Jordan, and he had promised to set up a unit in the Royal Court to monitor and help them. My question is, is there a similar problem in Israel also? And you as US Commerce Minister had taken it up in WTO and before that in GATT and all that about the flow of human resource? So, how do you look at the response of Jordan King and other countries?

**Hon. President:** This is a problem which we are having with many other countries in regard to the uninterrupted flow of working forces from one country to another country, and at the bilateral level we are trying to resolve it. And this is one of the important agenda of the Commerce Ministry.

**Question:** Sir, in your interview to the Jordanian paper which Gautam-da was referring to, you had invoked Jawaharlal Nehru and referred about the five principles of peaceful coexistence as expounded by the first Prime Minister. What is the importance of Nehru's message and ideas in today's context and today's polity?

**Hon. President:** Certain messages and principles have relevance for a very very long period of time. Peaceful coexistence is one such message and it is not bound within a time frame.

Thank you.

(Concluded)



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