



Ministry of External Affairs
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Remarks by External Affairs Minister at the Indian Community Reception in Cairo, Egypt (August 23, 2015)

August 23, 2015

Ambassador of India to Egypt Shri Sanjay Bhattarcharya,

Secretary (East) in my Ministry, Shri Anil Wadhwa,

Distinguished Members of the Indian community,

My dear Brothers & Sisters,

Namaste!

I am delighted to start my first ever visit to Egypt with an interaction with all of you. I have arrived only a few hours back and it is good to start my visit by meeting the Indian community in Egypt.

Friends, I am always impressed with the great success our citizens have achieved in foreign lands. I am delighted that the Indian community in Egypt has set the benchmark very high. Not only are you the leaders in the organisations that you represent but you have also contributed substantially to the development of close ties between India and Egypt.

I understand that your contributions are in the fields of trade and commerce, finance and banking, international organisations and multinational corporations, manufacturing and services. Some of you have played a singular role in promoting yoga, Indian languages, meditation and the arts in bringing our cultures closer together.

It is impressive that Indian investments in about 50 companies are almost US\$3 billion, in sectors such as petrochemicals, textiles, agriculture and chemicals, consumer products and others. Your technical skills at a competitive cost have been an indispensable part of the local economy and I understand you employ almost 35,000 Egyptians and contribute significantly to the export earnings of Egypt. Although small in numbers, you are recognised as a successful and integrated community.

I have heard that some of you have been here for many decades and many have integrated fully in Egyptian society. Some of you have arrived more recently and are contributing to the improvement of efficiencies in Egypt, in businesses, MNCs, IT, health and others. I notice that you represent the entire spectrum of the vibrant diversity of India and come from different parts of the country.

I am happy that you have kept your traditions alive and celebrate Holi, Diwali, Dussehra and Eid with the equal fervour and I am happier to learn that you have invited the Egyptians to become part of our celebrations. I am told that Holi is now a very popular event among the youth in Cairo.

Friends, you have earned the love and respect of not just the Egyptians, but the entire world. The hardworking and peaceful nature of our community along with our values resonate deeply with Egypt and let me congratulate each one of you for your contributions. Your achievements make all of us proud.

Friends, you all would remember the last General Elections and the huge mandate that was given to the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. As the results came in, we saw the unprecedented mandate that was given to us. We were not surprised for we knew the desire and aspiration in you. It is our duty to realise those aspirations that you had voted for in the elections in May 2014.

Friends, let me assure you that a unique transformation is taking place in India in the economic and political realms. We are committed to good governance, transparency, inclusive and sustainable growth and we are ushering into an era of rapid economic development.

There is a positive and upbeat business sentiment in our country following the numerous initiatives announced by our Hon'ble Prime Minister. Our 'Make in India' campaign to make India an investment and manufacturing destination, the 'Digital India programme' to transform India into a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy, 'Smart Cities', 'Model Villages', 'Swachh Bharat' and the 'Clean Ganga mission' are transforming our nation.

In last one year, our Government has shown will and determination, we could open 14 Crore bank accounts under 'Jan Dhan Yojna' for poor to achieve an inclusive growth and built 4.25 lakh toilets in Indian schools under 'Swachh Vidyalayas' scheme.

I am happy to say that we have achieved great success in the field of foreign affairs as well. The greatness of India now has a stronger resonance and our circle of friends has grown. With economic growth and social advancement, our sphere of influence has also grown. Countries look to us as a role model.

This region in the Gulf and in the West Asia and North Africa is growing in significance from the perspective of our national interests. Not only is this area home to 7 million Indians but is also crucial for our energy security, resources, and indeed our national security. We shall continue to pay greater attention to this region and seek closer cooperation and stronger partnership.

Friends, our overseas community is an inalienable part of India's transformation and our Government has invited all of you to come and join in these efforts and further our development agenda. The welfare of our citizens outside India, particularly in this region, is a top priority of our Government. We have been proactively engaging with all the stakeholders to address the concerns of our overseas community. I was happy to learn that last week the Egyptian authorities have agreed to transfer back to India two prisoners who have served 22 and 16 years in Egyptian prisons. They will now be able to return home shortly.

The Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs has undertaken a number of measures to ensure the welfare of our community in Egypt including the establishment of the Indian Community Welfare Fund (ICWF) to assist our nationals in distress. I understand a number of people have been provided assistance under this fund.

I am pleased that the Embassy of India has been working closely with the Indian Community and has established two organisations.

First, Indian Community Association of Egypt (ICAE) maintains regular contact and coordinates cultural and other activities of the Indian Diaspora and has established Area Wards in different cities to facilitate faster contacts in case of emergency situations. I congratulate the appointment of the Area Ward Volunteers who will be our first port of contact in case of emergency.

Second, the India Business Forum (IBF) has been created as a platform to promote Brand India and leverage the business interests of all Indian companies here.

The Embassy also has a system of open house where you can meet concerned officers without appointment. The Embassy has one of the most active social media platforms globally and puts out regular advisories for the safety of our nationals here and maintains a 24x7

helpline for Indians in distress. We are proactively engaging with the Egyptian authorities on all matters concerning the safety and welfare of our nationals here.

Friends, before concluding, I would like to thank the friendly people of Egypt for hosting our citizens. We are two countries with ancient civilisations, much like the two branches of a tree. India has always viewed Egypt as the major power and a stabilising factor in the region and shares the belief that our partnership will be strengthened further in the new era.

I once again take this opportunity to express my great appreciation for your contribution to our motherland. Continue making her proud. I wish every one of you a successful and prosperous future.

Jai Hind



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Visitors: 148645561 , Page last updated on: 23/8/2015

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