

## **India - Qatar Relations**

India-Qatar cooperation in diverse sectors has been steadily growing in an excellent framework provided by historically close ties and regular and substantive engagement, including at the highest levels of the two Governments. The large, diverse, accomplished and highly regarded Indian community is making an important contribution to Qatar's progress and in nurturing the bonds of deep-rooted friendship and multi-faceted cooperation between the two countries.

### **Political Relations**

Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi paid a landmark Official Visit to Doha from 4-5 June, 2016 at the invitation of HH Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al Thani, the Emir of Qatar. PM's visit provided an excellent opportunity to both sides to engage at the highest level, and imparted fresh momentum to our bilateral ties. This was the highest-level visit from India to Qatar since the visit of former Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh in November, 2008.

Before visiting Doha, PM called the Emir on 3 June, 2016 to convey best wishes on his birthday. Earlier, on 2 November, 2015, the Emir had held a telephonic conversation with PM and the two leaders had discussed bilateral relations between the two countries and means to enhance and develop them, and reviewed a number of issues of common interest.

There has been regular exchange of high-level bilateral visits in the recent past. The Emir of Qatar HH Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al Thani had paid a State Visit to India in March 2015. Previously, the then Emir HH Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani [now the Father Emir] had visited India in 1999, 2005 and 2012.

PM was received at the airport on 4 June, 2016 by HE Sheikh Abdullah Bin Nasser Bin Khalifa Al-Thani, Prime Minister and Minister of Interior (QPM); Finance Minister HE Ali Shareef Al Emadi was the Minister accompanying PM throughout the visit. QPM also hosted a private dinner in PM's honour the same evening. Earlier, PM interacted with and addressed about 500 Indian workers at a medical camp, organized by the Indian Community Benevolent Forum and the Indian Medical Association at Mesheireb Downtown Doha Project. PM also shared refreshments with the workers on this occasion. Minister of Public Health HE Dr. Hanan Mohammed Al Kuwari was also present on the occasion.

PM had a highly cordial and fruitful round table interaction with top investors/ businessmen of Qatar on the morning of 5 June, 2016. Minister of Economy and Commerce, HE Sheikh Ahmed bin Jassim Al Thani, who is also Vice Chairman of Qatar's Sovereign Wealth Fund, Qatar Investment Authority, co-chaired the meeting.

On 5 June, 2016, Hon'ble PM was received by His Highness the Emir, with ceremonial honours, at Emiri Diwan. The Emir hosted a Lunch Banquet in PM's honour. The two leaders exchanged views on bilateral, regional and multilateral issues of common interest. During the wide ranging discussions held in a most cordial and friendly atmosphere, the two sides, inter alia, agreed to constitute an inter-ministerial High Level Joint Committee to regularly review all bilateral matters, as well as regional and global issues of mutual interest. Recognizing the existing goodwill, the two leaders agreed to further broaden and deepen bilateral engagement in diverse fields of mutual interest. They agreed to further enhance high-level political exchanges, defence and security cooperation, trade and economic relations and people-to-people linkages. They stressed upon the need for building a strong partnership for the 21st century between the two countries in keeping with their responsibility for promoting peace, stability and security in the region and the world.

Before his departure from Doha, PM addressed a most broad based gathering of Indian nationals representing the large Indian community in Qatar, at a community event organised in PM's honour by the Embassy. Minister for Administrative Development and Labour and Social Affairs Mr. Issa bin Saad Al Naimi Juffali was present on this occasion. The Indian community in Qatar has expressed great joy and pride at PM's visit.

Seven MoUs/ Agreements between the two sides were signed during PM's visit, as follows: (1) MoU for investment in National Investment and Infrastructure Fund of India ; (2) MoU on Financial Intelligence Unit – India (FIU-IND) and the Qatar Financial Information Unit (QFIU); (3) MoU for Cooperation in Skill Development and Recognition of Qualifications ; (4) MoU for Cooperation in the field of Health; (5) Agreement on Cooperation and Mutual Assistance in Custom Matters; (6) MoU on Tourism Cooperation; and (7) First Executive Program for MoU in the field of Youth and Sports.

As a gesture in honour of PM's visit to Doha, the Qatari side released 23 Indian prisoners under Emiri pardon on the first day of the holy month of Ramadan on 6 June, 2016. PM, who had discussed the well-being and welfare of Indian nationals with the Qatari leadership, expressed gratitude, via twitter, to the Emir for this gesture . EAM also tweeted to convey thanks to Qatar.

When the results of the last General Elections in India were announced on 16 May, 2014, QPM had made a congratulatory phone call to PM the same day. In his tweet to thank QPM, Prime Minister had stated : "We will take India-Qatar ties to newer heights". Qatari leadership fully shares this vision of PM.

During the Emir's visit to India in March, 2015, the two sides discussed ways and means to build a forward-looking partnership by further broadening and deepening the bilateral engagement and by better leveraging the existing complementarities between the two countries in key areas of mutual interest including inter alia, energy, power, petrochemicals, investments, infrastructure, development, project exports, education, culture, health, human resource, media and information technology. Six Agreements/MOUs were signed during the visit, in the following areas: (i) Transfer of sentenced Persons; (ii) Mutual Cooperation between Foreign Service Institute, MEA and Diplomatic Institute, MFA; (iii) Cooperation in Information and Communication Technology; (iv) Cooperation in Atmospheric and Ocean Sciences; (v) Cooperation in Radio and Television; and (vi) Mutual Cooperation and Exchange of News between Qatar News Agency and United New Agency.

Before his visit to India, the Emir deeply appreciated Prime Minister's gesture of writing a letter to him on the deep-rooted relations and multi-faceted cooperation between India and Qatar, and sending National Security Adviser Shri Ajit Doval to Doha on 11-12 February, 2015 to present the letter. NSA's visit was the first high level visit from our side after the current Government in India assumed office. Warmly reciprocating the sentiments expressed in Prime Minister's letter, the Emir emphasized the importance of Qatar-India partnership, appreciated the contribution of the Indian community in Qatar, and conveyed that he was greatly looking forward to his first visit to India. NSA also met with Qatar's Prime Minister & Minister of Interior and Minister of Foreign Affairs.

There have also been other high level contacts between the two countries since the current Government in India assumed office. Both sides have been in active interaction. External Affairs Minister Smt. Sushma Swaraj and Dr. Khalid bin Mohammad Al Attiyah, former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Qatar (QFM) spoke on phone a few times and also met at the India-GCC Ministerial meetings on the sidelines of the 69th and 70th UNGA in New York in September, 2014 and September, 2015, respectively. Ahead of the 70<sup>th</sup> UNGA Session, the Emir had received a letter from PM on UN reform and other multilateral issues, and conveying India's thanks for Qatar's support for the First International Day of Yoga (IDY).

Mr. Mohammed bin Abdullah Al Rumaihi, former Assistant Foreign Minister (AFM) had visited Delhi on 5 June, 2014 and held Foreign Office Consultations (FOC) with Shri Anil Wadhwa, and the then Secretary(East), and called on EAM. The then Secretary(East) had visited Doha during the holy month of Ramadan on 9 July, 2014. He met with AFM Al Rumaihi and the Emir's Political Adviser, and called on QPM. Law and Justice Minister Shri D.V. Sadananda Gowda met with Qatar's Justice Minister Dr. Hassan bin Lahdnan Al Hassan Al Mohannadi during his visit to Doha as the leader of the Indian delegation to the 13<sup>th</sup> United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (UNCCPCJ) in April, 2015. Qatar's Transport Minister and Commander of Qatar Emiri Air Force visited the Aero Indian Exhibition in Bengaluru in February, 2015.

Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Petroleum & Natural Gas [MOPNG] Shri Dharmendra Pradhan visited Doha on 8-10 November 2015, leading a high level delegation to the 6<sup>th</sup> Asian Ministerial Energy Roundtable (AMER). As a special gesture, QPM along with Dr. Mohammed bin Saleh A Sada, Minister of Energy and Industry received MOPNG for a meeting on 9 November before QPM inaugurated the 6<sup>th</sup> AMER; MOPNG also had a separate meeting with his counterpart. MOPNG's address at the first Plenary Session of 6<sup>th</sup> AMER was highly acclaimed. He held bilateral meetings with Heads of a number of other delegations. MOPNG also had an interaction with a broad-based gathering of the Indian community in Qatar.

### **Defence**

India-Qatar Defence Cooperation Agreement, signed during the visit of former PM to Qatar in November 2008 and extended for a further period of five years in 2013, is implemented through the Joint Defence Cooperation Committee (JDCC), which had its fourth meeting in Delhi on 6-7 January, 2015. As a follow up of the 4th JDCC, a scoping delegation of Qatar Coast Guard visited India from 21-25 February, 2015, and a team from Joaan bin Jassim Command and Staff College visited India in April 2015.

A three-member delegation from Joaan Bin Jassim Joint Command and Staff College, led by its Commandant, visited National Defence College (NDC), Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA), National Maritime Foundation (NMF) and Defence Services Staff College (DSSC, Wellington) in India from 13 to 18 Apr 15. A Brigadier rank officer of Qatar Armed Forces joined the 56th NDC course in January 2016.

Indian Coast Guard Ship ICGS SANKALP visited Doha Port from 24-28 January 2016 in conjunction with the celebrations of India's 67<sup>th</sup>

Republic Day. For the first time ever, the 34-member ceremonial band of Qatar Armed Forces played the National Anthems of the two countries at the Embassy's Official Reception to celebrate India's 67<sup>th</sup> Republic Day on 26 January, 2016. Ambassador and the CO hosted a Reception onboard ICGS Sankalp on 27 January, 2016.

A 6-member delegation from Qatar Emiri Naval Forces [QENF] attended Indian Navy's International Fleet Review (IFR) at Vishakhapatnam from 4-8 February, 2016. A high level delegation from the Qatar Emiri Land Forces participated at the Ninth International Land, Naval, Internal Homeland Security and Defence System Exposition - 'DEFEXPO INDIA-2016', held in Goa from 28 to 31 March, 2016. A three member delegation of QENF visited the Southern Naval Command, Kochi, Indian Naval Academy [INA], Ezhimala and INS Hamla, Mumbai, from 18-22 April, 2016.

A high level delegation from India participated at the Doha International Maritime Defence Exhibition and Conference (DIMDEX 2016) held at Doha, Qatar from 29-31 March 2016. The delegation was led by Vice Admiral Sunil Lanba, Flag Officer Commanding in Chief, Western Naval Command of the Indian Navy [now Chief of the Naval Staff] and included two senior officers of the Indian Coast Guard. Indian Naval Ship 'Beas' visited Doha port from 28 March to 01 April 2016 to participate in DIMDEX 2016. An official reception to celebrate the high level participation of India at DIMDEX 2016 was hosted by Vice Admiral Sunil Lanba [now CoNS] and Ambassador on board the ship on 30 March, 2016. The Qatari side has evinced interest in the opportunities offered under the 'Make in India' initiative for joint production of defence equipment in India.

### **Commercial Relations**

With an annual import of 7.5 million metric tons (MMT) of LNG under a long term contract between Petronet of India and RasGas of Qatar, and some spot purchases by Indian companies from time to time, Qatar is the largest supplier of LNG to India, accounting for over 65% of India's global import and 15% of Qatar's export of LNG. On 31 December, 2015, Petronet LNG, India's largest natural gas importer, and Qatar's RasGas Co. Ltd signed an agreement for an additional supply of 1.0 mn tons of LNG annually from the RasGas through the remainder of the 25-year contract, ending in 2028.

Besides, LNG, India also imports ethylene, propylene, ammonia, urea and polyethylene from Qatar. Therefore, the balance of trade continues to be heavily in Qatar's favour. However, in the last two years, there has been a substantial growth of India's exports, amounting to nearly \$1 billion out of

two-way trade of nearly \$17 billion in 2013-14, registering an export growth of 45% over the export figure (\$687 million) in 2012-13.

In 2014-15, India's exports exceeded \$1 billion (\$1056 million), though bilateral trade came down to \$15.7 billion due to decline in Qatar's exports to India from \$15.7 billion in 2013-14 to \$14.6 billion in 2014-15. Major items of Indian exports are machinery & equipment, transport equipment, articles of iron or steel, plastic & articles thereof, construction material, electrical and electronic items, textiles & garments, chemicals, precious stones, rubber, spices and cereals. India is the third largest export destination for Qatar (behind Japan and South Korea) and ranks at 10<sup>th</sup> position for Qatar's imports.

Both countries are keen to expand collaborations to their mutual benefit in the fields of energy; business, finance and investments; infrastructure; education and research; sports; travel and tourism; and other areas. Besides official interactions, people-to-people contacts and initiatives by private sector are energising dialogue and cooperation in various sectors.

India's corporate sector is increasingly pursuing business opportunities in Qatar. A number of reputed Indian companies, particularly in construction/infrastructure and IT, have operations in Qatar, including L&T; Punj Lloyd; Shapoorji Palonji; Voltas; Simplex; TCS; Wipro; MahindraTech; HCL; etc. SBI, ICICI and other Indian banks have limited operations under Qatar Financial Centre or private exchange houses in Qatar.

Following an MoU signed between Aiana Resorts (part of Leela Group) and Faisal Holding during the Emir's visit to India in March, 2015, both partners are constructing a high end luxury apartments complex in Doha's West Bay area, with 50% investment by each. During the Emir's visit, another MOU was signed for setting up a multi-speciality hospital in Qatar in partnership with Medanta of India.

On 7 June, 2016, the Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy (SCDL) announced that Qatari company, Al Balagh Trading & Contracting and Indian construction company, Larsen & Toubro Limited (L&T), had been appointed as the main contractors to build the 40,000 seat capacity Al Rayyan Stadium for FIFA 2022. The joint-venture was made official at a signing ceremony at SCDL.

In the economic arena, there have been a number of other notable developments in our bilateral cooperation with Qatar in the last over two years. Mr. Sultan Al Khater, Under Secretary in the Ministry of Economy &

Commerce had led an 18 member composite delegation, focused on economic partnership, to New Delhi on 25-26 March, 2014. There has been expansion in business operations of Indian companies in infrastructural and IT sectors present in Qatar, including such prestigious projects such as Gold Line Metro and Wakra Bypass highway being awarded to Larsen & Toubro. 45 Indian companies participated in Project Qatar Exhibition (PQE) in Doha in May, 2014. The number increased to 60 at PQE held in May, 2015; at PQE in May, 2016, there were 55 Indian companies. 'Vibrant Gujarat' business delegation visited Doha from 3-5 September, 2014. The Embassy organized three business and investment events, attended by several Qatari businessmen/investors, in Doha on 25 September, 2014 coinciding with PM's launch of 'Make in India' campaign. A 20-member NASSCOM delegation visited Doha on 18-19 March, 2015.

There has also been encouraging participation from Qatar at major business conferences in India – the 4<sup>th</sup> India-Arab Partnership Conference in New Delhi on 26-27 November, 2014; Vibrant Gujarat Summit in Gandhinagar, Gujarat from 11-13 January, 2015; the Partnership Summit 2015 in Jaipur, Rajasthan from 15-17 January, 2015; BlackRock India Investor Summit in New Delhi on 3 February, 2015 (at which former PM of Qatar, Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim bin Jabor Al Thani was among the attendees) and Aero India in Bengaluru from 18-22 February, 2015.

In its engagement with Qatar Investment Authority and other relevant Government organisations, and private businessmen and investors in Qatar, Embassy of India, Doha continues to actively promote 'Make in India' and other major initiatives of Gol and highlight India's distinctive strengths as a preferred business and investment partner.

Minister of Railways Shri Suresh Prabhu, Qatar's Finance Minister Ali Shareef Al Emadi and Governor of Qatar Central Bank Sheikh Abdulla Bin Saoud Al Thani were among the dignitaries who attended the inauguration of the full fledged branch of Doha Bank in Mumbai on 29 April 2015.

The Embassy organized a substantive programme for the visit of a 7-member multi-sectoral delegation from the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) led by Dr. Naushad Forbes, President-designate, CII to Doha on 20-21 October 2015.

A delegation of Indian Electrical & Electronics Manufacturers' Association [IEEMA] visited Qatar on 27 October 2015 to promote 'ELECARAMA 2016' scheduled to be held in Bengaluru from 13-17 February 2016.

Qatar Airways started its flight to Nagpur on 1 December 2015; Nagpur is the 13<sup>th</sup> destination in India for regular Qatar Airways flights from

Doha. Qatar Airways (QA) now has total weekly passenger flights from 95 to 102 across 13 key cities in India.

India Tourism, Dubai, in cooperation with Embassy of India in Doha organized a well-attended promotional exhibition/road show for the travel and tour operators in Doha, Qatar, on 18 November, 2015 to promote 'Destination India', along with 11 hotels & a tour operator from India. Members of the Travel Industry and Media of Qatar interacted with the officials of India Tourism-Dubai.

While the current volume of Qatar's FDI in India is modest, Qatar's Sovereign Wealth Fund [Qatar Investment Authority (QIA)] and other State-owned entities, as well as private investors in Qatar are keenly looking at attractive investment options in infrastructural sectors in India in various sectors, including real estate/construction, roads/highways, airports/airlines, ports; LNG, petrochemicals and fertilizers; and tourism/hospitality.

There is vast potential for QIA to substantially increase its investments in India, keeping in view India's huge investment needs (\$1 trillion in next five years in infrastructural sectors alone) and investment friendly policies, as also QIA's keenness to diversify its global portfolio. Mission has been actively engaged with QIA and other State-owned and private entities in Qatar, highlighting the new initiatives and policies of the current Government, such as 'Make in India' and the distinctive advantages of India as an investment destination.

During PM's visit to Qatar from 4-5 June, 2016, a MoU for investment in India's National Investment and Infrastructure Fund (NIIF) was signed with QIA.

The setting up of an India-Qatar Business Forum comprising senior representatives of a number of Indian companies and Qatari businessmen nominated by Qatar Chamber of Commerce and Industry is another positive development. Indian Business & Professional Network (IBPN), functioning under the aegis of the Embassy, also contributes to promotion of trade & investment between the two sides.

### **Cultural Relations**

Cultural ties between India and Qatar are deep rooted and actively nurtured by both sides. Qataris admire India's cultural diversity. There is a regular flow of Indian artistes performing in Qatar at events organised by community organizations affiliated to the Indian Cultural Centre (ICC), apex body of associations of the Indian community functioning under the aegis of

Embassy of India, Doha, and private sponsors. With the Embassy's cooperation and support, ICC has organized a large scale Community Festival titled 'A Passage to India' in November, 2013; March, 2015 and April, 2016, aimed at presenting India in a composite way i.e. showcasing India's rich cultural diversity as well as strengths and achievements in different spheres. The 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of this Festival was organized in celebration of the 125<sup>th</sup> Birth Anniversary of Late Bharat Ratna Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, the architect of India's Constitution.

ICCR-sponsored photo exhibition on Islamic Monuments of India, and Kathak performances and Kalbeliya folk dance performances organised by the Embassy in Doha in September-October, 2014, August, 2015 and April, 2016, respectively, were highly acclaimed. Exhibitions on India by young photographers held by Qatar Photographic Society in the last three years have also been very popular. A few Indian films/documentaries are usually shown at the annual Film Festival of Doha Film Institute.

There are 14 Indian schools in Qatar, offering CBSE curricula to over 30,000 students, most of whom are the children of Indian nationals working in Qatar.

Both countries had signed an Agreement on Cultural Cooperation during the former Emir's visit in April 2012. Qatari side has proposed to celebrate India-Qatar Year of Culture in 2019.

**Yoga** : India deeply appreciates Qatar's support, as a co-sponsor, to its Resolution at the UNGA, adopted unanimously with a record 177 co-sponsors, declaring 21 June as the International Day of Yoga (IDY), and for various activities to celebrate the first IDY in Qatar. We are grateful to Government of Qatar and Q-Post for the release of a commemorative stamp to mark this occasion.

*Fath Al Khair* [meaning 'the Victory of the Good'] Dhow undertook a voyage from Doha to Mumbai, via Oman during 5 October - 17 November 2015. On arrival in Mumbai, the crew were given a warm and enthusiastic reception at a ceremony attended by Hon'ble Governor of Maharashtra Shri C. Vidyasagar Rao and other dignitaries and officials. This unique initiative was launched in 2013 under the patronage of HH Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, the Father Emir of Qatar, as a commemoration by Qataris of the historical pearl trade route that existed between Qatar and India. It is significant that on its second voyage, *Fath Al Khair* sailed to Mumbai, whereas its first voyage was to neighbouring Gulf countries.

Mr. Hassan Al Thawadi, Secretary General of Qatar's Supreme Committee of Delivery and Legacy for FIFA 2022, and other senior officials participated in the Asian Football Confederation annual awards function held at Gurgaon on 29 November 2015. There has been regular and active participation from India at major sports tournaments held in Qatar, including World Boxing Championship from 5-15 October 2015, at which India won a Bronze medal, and the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) Athletics World Championships from 22-31 October 2015, with the participation of a 22-member team from India who won two Silver medals. Qatar National Sports Day (QNSD) was celebrated on 9 February 2016 at various sporting/cultural venues in Doha and across various other locations in the State of Qatar. Ambassador and other Embassy officials participated in various events.

### **Indian Community**

Indian nationals comprise the largest expatriate community in Qatar and are engaged in a wide spectrum of professionals, including medicine; engineering; education, finance; banking; business; media and labour. They are highly regarded for their honesty, hard work, qualifications and contribution to the development and progress of Qatar.

The Embassy accords foremost priority to reaching out to the Indian community in Qatar in a pro-active, helpful and inclusive manner, ensuring their well-being and welfare, and render services to them courteously, efficiently and in a helpful manner. We are particularly mindful of our duties towards the large number of Indian workers who are making a vital contribution to Qatar's progress by the sweat of their brow. Several volunteers from the Indian community are also helping our workers, mainly through the Indian Community Benevolent Forum (ICBF), functioning under the aegis of Embassy of India, Doha - ICBF was awarded Pravasi Bharatiya Samman in January, 2011. Both countries have a Joint Working Group on Labour and Manpower Development, which held its last (3<sup>rd</sup>) meeting in Doha in August, 2015. Next Meeting of the JWG is scheduled to be held in India. We remain in close contact with the authorities concerned in Qatar regarding the well being of our workers and other nationals, and appreciate their cooperation and support. We welcome the process of labour reforms undertaken by Government of Qatar, and look forward to expeditious implementation of further steps being considered.

More detailed information on the Embassy's consular and labour & community welfare services is given on its website.

## **Useful Resources:**

Embassy of India, Doha Website:

[www.indianembassyqatar.gov.in](http://www.indianembassyqatar.gov.in)

Embassy of India, Doha Twitter Handle:

<https://twitter.com/IndEmbDoha>

Embassy of India, Doha Facebook Page:

<https://www.facebook.com/IndianEmbassyQatar>

Embassy of India, Doha Youtube Account:

[www.youtube.com/user/Embassydoha](http://www.youtube.com/user/Embassydoha)

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