

INDO-ISRAEL RELATIONS: NEW DIMENSIONS UNDER MODI ERA

Dr Dipak Kumar Dash

Assistant Professor in Political Science

Christ College, Cuttack, Odisha

In the changing atmosphere of International Relations India and Israel are trying to their best to establish good and healthy relationship. Since New Delhi normalised relations with Tel Aviv in 1992, the two countries have steadily strengthened their bilateral ties. Although India recognised the state of Israel on 17 September 1950, but there was no substantial exchanges between them. It took 42 years for them to move from limited recognition to full engagement. This relationship between the two democracies, which was mostly discreet and under the radar, with India hesitant to acknowledge the relationship in public, was often described as the proverbial “mistress syndrome”. It is now moving towards a robust partnership. After coming to power, the Modi Government makes India’s foreign policy more pragmatic. As a part of this programme, Modi Govt extended a friendship hand towards Israel. Now India and Israel are on the verge of a good and healthy relationship.

Historical Background:

The relationship between India and Jews is as old as history. By analyzing the geography of Israel it is suggested that the authors of Old Testament were talking about India, where the trade of animals such as monkeys and peacocks existed. According to Chaim Menachem Rabin, the connection between ancient Israel and the Indian subcontinent, was recorded during the reign of King Solomon (10th century BCE). Ancient trade and cultural communication between India and the Levant is mentioned in the Periplus of the Erythraean Sea and the accounts surrounding Queen of Sheba in the Hebrew Bible. The trade relations of both communities can be traced back to 1,000 BCE and earlier to the time of the Indus valley civilization of the Indian subcontinent and the Babylonian culture of Middle East. A Buddhist story describes Indian merchants visiting Babylonia and selling peacocks for public display. Similar, earlier accounts describe monkeys exhibited to the public. Trade connections between India and Palestine and Mediterranean Jewish communities continued, and later, the languages of these cultures started to share linguistic similarities.

Relations between 1947- 1980:

Between 1947 -1980 Indian Foreign Policy continued to remain fully supportive of the rights and demands of the people of Palestine, and India continuously maintained the policy of according full recognition to the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), particularly its leader Yasser Arafat. India kept on the process of development of its relations with Israel to a minimum level. In all international forum, India always gave support to the cause of the people of Palestine. On 17 September 1950, India officially recognised the State of Israel. Following India’s recognition of Israel, Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru stated, “We would have recognised Israel long ago, because Israel is a fact. We refrained because of our desire not to offend the sentiments of our friends in the Arab countries.” In 1953, Israel was permitted to open a consulate in Bombay. However, the Nehru government did not want to pursue full diplomatic relations with Israel as it supported the Palestinian cause, and believed that permitting Israel to open an embassy in New Delhi would damage relations with the Arab world.

During this period India followed a Pro- Arab policy. It did not try to develop relations with Israel. There were several reasons behind such an Indian policy:

- India fully accepted the right of the people of Palestine to have an independent sovereign state of their own.
- India did not like the Israeli policy of using its armed forces for dominating the Palestinian people and the Arab countries.
- The presence of sizeable Muslim population in India impelled Indian leaders to follow a pro-Palestinian policy.
- The dependence of India upon Arab countries for the import of crude oil also influenced India to follow a pro-Arab policy in West Asia.
- As a founder member of Non-Aligned Movement, India didn't like the strong USA role in West Asia.
- The dominant political party i.e. the Congress Party of India had a strong soft corner for the people of Palestine. Along with Congress, the Left Parties of India were also in favour of development of strong relations with Arab countries and Palestine because Israel was a strong Pro-USA state in West Asia.

Relations between 1992 –2014:

Around 1980s the world atmosphere got a huge change. Much water has flowed under many bridges in West Asia and elsewhere. China changed its policy towards Israel. The erstwhile Soviet Union was willing to re-establish diplomatic relations with Israel. Members of Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) had established their relations with Israel. Even the Ayatollahs of Iran had no hesitation in receiving arms from or via Tel Aviv. Half a dozen African countries have restored diplomatic relations with the Jewish state and others want to. A review of Indian policy is thus clearly called for. Two factors were playing dominant role in this direction. Indian foreign policy found it essential to develop relations with Israel because of the security needs of India and also because of the fact that Muslim countries of West Asia were not giving due recognition to India's West Asian policy. In fact, the OIC almost always extended full support to Pakistan and maintained a pro-Pakistani orientation on Kashmir. It did not even consider the fact that the number of Muslims living in India as equal citizens' was much more than the total population of Pakistan and several other Islamic states. India now believed that even while supporting fully the cause of Palestine, it was possible and necessary to develop relations with Israel.

During the period of Cold War, the world witnessed several rounds of war between Israel and Arab states. This issue has been keeping West Asia as an area of intense conflict in International Relations. India wants a peaceful resolution of Palestine problem and fully supports the cause for the establishment of a sovereign Palestine state of the people of Palestine. The results were swift. In 1992, full diplomatic relations were established. A pivotal subsequent episode was the Kargill War of May 1999, which took place a year after the ascendance to government of the BJP. In that year, Pakistani forces entered the Kargill- Dras region in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. India's shortcomings in the field of defense were rapidly exposed. While conventional wars between India and Pakistan had taken place in the past, this was a different type of conflict. The Indian armed forces needed to rapidly adapt to fighting a low intensity war against an opponent possessing nuclear arms.

Israel possessed vast experience of direct relevance in the relevant fields of border control, low intensity operations and counter-terrorism, and Jerusalem immediately began to provide assistance sometimes against the direct wishes of the west. According to some accounts, precision drones and laser guided missiles for the Indian Air Force's Mirage 2000H fighters were provided by Israel, alongside supplies of much needed mortar ammunition. This episode was a pivotal moment in the developing relationship, cementing in Indian minds the perception of Israel as a useful friend, prepared to act in real time at a moment of need. Since the Kargill war, the volume and depth of relations between Israel and India has steadily increased. Today, India is the single largest buyer of Israeli military equipment, and Israel is the second largest supplier of military equipment to India, after Russia.

This commitment is not purely material in nature. The threats that India continues to face from Islamist terror groups operating from across the border in Pakistan are directly analogous to those that Israel faces on both its southern and northern borders. The volume of the arms trade between Israel and India reached \$600 million in 2016. Among the ‘highlights’ of this relationship are a 2007 deal for \$2.5 billion between India and Israel Aerospace Industries, in which IAI were contracted to develop an anti-aircraft system for India. This was the largest single defense contract in Israel’s history at that time. A number of very significant contracts have followed – including the purchase of Heron TP drones from IAI in 2015, and the purchase of two Phalcon Airborne Early Warning and Control Systems (AWACS) from Israel in 2016.

The Israeli ability to respond quickly and effectively, without undue concern for formalities, as noted above, was of particular relevance in the Kargill war. It proved helpful again when India was struck by a major terror attack in Mumbai in 2008. At that time, Israel despatched a team of paramedics to the city, and offered help with investigations and to send a special forces team to Mumbai. While the later offer was not taken up by New Delhi, the episode served to further solidify the sense of common threats and common determination to resist them shared by Israel and India.

In 2008, Israel and India signed an Agriculture Cooperation Agreement. The agreement established the Indo-Israel Agricultural Project. In March, 2011, it was announced in another major deal that India would purchase 8356 Israeli Spike anti-tank missiles, 321 launchers, 15 training simulators and peripheral equipment, for \$1 billion, from Israel’s Rafael Advanced Defense Systems. In addition to the purchase of military hardware, the practice of intelligence sharing between Indian and Israeli services forms, an important element of the relationship between the two states. In the field of science and technology, cooperation in this field was among the first areas of joint Israeli-Indian activity following the establishment of diplomatic relations. As early as 1993, an agreement was signed for direct cooperation in this field. Information technology and bio-technology are the main areas of common interest in this regard. In the area of bilateral trade, the volume of trade between India and Israel has grown from \$200 million in 1992 when diplomatic relations began to \$4.52 billion in 2014. A free trade agreement between the two countries is currently under negotiation.

Ezer Weizman became the first Israeli President to visit India in 1997. In 2000, L.K Advani became the first Indian minister to visit the state of Israel. Later that year, Jaswant Singh became the first Indian Foreign Minister to visit Israel. Following the visit, the two countries set up a joint anti-terror commission. The foreign ministers of the two countries said intensified co-operation would range from counter-terrorism to information technology. In 2003, Ariel Sharon was the first Israeli Prime Minister to visit India. Sharon expressed satisfaction over his talks with Indian leaders. Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee said the visit would increase ties between India and Israel. Sharon invited Vajpayee to visit Israel. Sharon said that Israelis “regard India to be one of the most important countries in the world,” and Vajpayee was sure that Sharon’s visit would bring the two countries closer together. In early 2006 Indian government ministers Sharad Pawar, Kapil Sibal and Kamal Nath visited Israel. Gujarat Chief Minister, Narendra Modi visited Israel in October 2006. Foreign Minister SM Krishna made a two-day visit to Israel in 2012

India-Israel Relations: Beginning of A New Era Under Modi:

Prime Minister Modi’s visit brought the bilateral relations out in the open. Though relations were established in 1992, various Indian governments have been coy in dealing with the Jewish State. Political visits and engagements have been limited. Until the Modi-Netanyahu meeting in the UN in September 2014, there were only two prime ministerial meetings since 1948. The first was between Rajiv Gandhi and Shimon Peres in September 1985 during the annual session of the UN General Assembly. The second was between Deve Gowda and Netanyahu in February 1997 at the World Economic Forum in Devos. While Prime Minister Gowda hosted President Ezer Weizman in December 1996– January 1997, a reciprocal visit to Israel had to wait until 2017. Bilateral visits have also increased since May 2014 and they include

visits by Home Minister Rajnath Singh (November 2014), President Pranab Mukherjee (October 2015) and External Affairs Minister Swaraj (January 2016) from India and Defence Minister Moshe Ya'alon (February 2015) and President Reuven Rivlin (November 2016) from Israel.

The Indo-Israeli relation is boosted with the election of Modi as Prime Minister in May 2014. In the initial months, his government largely followed the policies of his predecessors but gradually a new pattern can be noticed. Israel became integral to Modi's 'constructive engagement' with the Middle East. Rather than keeping Israel 'separate' or treating it as a 'special' case, India appeared to be seeking its integration in its policy towards the wider region.

Now New Delhi under the leadership of Narendra Modi is interested to maintain a cordial relationship with Israel. A number of factors are responsible to work in this direction. These are:

➤ Israel is a leading power in agricultural innovation. So that cooperation in the field of agriculture has become an important aspect of Indo-Israel relations. It is natural for Israel to recognise the importance of agriculture and harmonise it with India's interests. The main occupation of 52 per cent of the Indian labour force relates to the agricultural sector, and an average Indian spends about one half of his household income on food. Therefore, it is prudent for India and Israel to put agriculture high on their agenda for cooperation. Israel has set up agriculture research centres in several Indian states and has plans to set up more centres of excellence in agriculture across India. These centres offer free training sessions to farmers in efficient agricultural techniques using Israeli technological expertise and know-how, including vertical farming, drip irrigation and soil solarisation. India's need for the agro-technology and improving agro-productivity have created opportunities for Israel, especially in irrigation, and soil management equipment and techniques. Likewise, deepening cooperation in areas such as water management, water harvesting, rural health, sanitation, start-ups and skills development would have a profound impact on India's overall development.

➤ Security and defence cooperation plays a significant role in growing India-Israel ties. Israel has limited instruments to advance its foreign policy interests. It is not a member of any key regional organisation and forum. Hence, defence and security cooperation has become the most effective foreign policy instrument for Israel. Despite India's non-engagement with Israel for a long time, Tel Aviv has provided military aid to India during all the wars it has fought after the First Kashmir War of 1947-48. The Indian defence establishment overcame its initial inhibitions of doing defence business with Israel, and the commercial aspect of this relationship has begun to blossom. Also, cooperation in the field of space technology and research, cyber security and information technology is likely to further intensify the engagement between the two countries.

➤ The Modi government is also beginning to work in trilateral frameworks with some countries, like Sri Lanka and Maldives, to promote open, balanced and inclusive maritime security mechanisms. These include joint projects, high-level dialogues and consultation on key political and security issues. As such, there is potential for embedding the India-Israel partnership into the India-United States (US) bilateral framework, or other trilateral frameworks in which both India and the US are members.

the Modi government has qualitatively and quantitatively enriched engagement with the Indian diaspora. It is trying to simplify rules, quickly responding to their concerns and feedback, and engaging them in the overall development agenda of the Indian government. Modi's proactive approach towards the Indian diaspora community has re-energised the nonresident Indian and persons of Indian origin communities. The Modi government has become a unifying force for the Indian diaspora community across the world, and India's outreach efforts are helping to strengthen their ties with their country of origin, as well as enhancing their stature in their country of residence. Israel is home to approximately 85,000 Jews of Indian-origin, and approximately 10,000 Indian citizens work in Israel. Connecting to the Indian community in Israel and leveraging on the diaspora strengths will further cement ties between the two countries.

➤ People-to-people contact, particularly deepening cultural linkages and tourism, is another important aspect of the relations between the two countries. Just before Modi's visit, the Israeli cabinet approved a series of measures aimed at strengthening ties between the two countries, including increasing the number of Indian tourists to the country from 45,000 today to 80,000 in four years, and providing incentives for the filming of Bollywood films in Israel. People-to-people contact is badly needed because about 12,000 to 13,000 Indian nationals stay in Israel and bulk of them are in caregiving industry and help the elderly folks in Israel. About 25 to 30 Gujarati diamond merchant families who have been in Israel for many years and they are doing good business. In Israel 550 Indian students pursuing doctoral and post-doctoral studies. A few Indian corporates also have their offices in Israel. yoga, which originated in ancient India, is popular in Israel.

By looking all these developments Israeli Prime Minister mentioned on 24 June 2017 that, "Next week, the Indian Prime Minister, my friend, Narendra Modi will arrive in Israel, This is a historic visit to Israel". He underlined that Modi's visit, the first by an Indian prime minister, is a "very significant step" in strengthening bilateral relations that are on a "constant upswing".

In 2014, BJP-led Government was established under the leadership of Mr Narendra Modi in India. He was strongly welcomed by Israel. Modi has great interest in boosting relations with Israel. In his telephone call, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu congratulated Modi on his victory in the election and highlighted the solid relations between both countries. Modi was described in glowing terms by Israeli security and political circles: "outgoing"; "assertive"; "extremely, extremely clever"; and very direct, very Israeli. Netanyahu was the first foreign official to congratulate Modi on his victory. "Some of the transformations around the world are extremely positive for us. One of these transformations are the elections results in India. In general, it seems to us that dealing with Asia is better than dealing with Europe" Netanyahu stated. On the occasion of the Jewish Passover, Modi tweeted in Hebrew and English: "happy holidays, friends". Netanyahu responded by tweeting, "Thank you, my friend, for your kind holiday greeting. The people of Israel eagerly await your historic visit."

In their meeting on the margins of the United States General Assembly meetings of September 2014, Netanyahu described the ties with India as close and excellent and that they would deepen in the future. Netanyahu added: "This is an opportunity for Israel and India to expand further our relationship." Netanyahu also said: "We are two old peoples, some of the oldest in the nations on earth but we are also two democracies, we are proud of our rich traditions but we are also eager to seize the future. I believe that if we work together we can do so with benefits to both our peoples. We are very excited by the prospects of greater and greater ties with India, we think the sky is the limit."

Modi told Netanyahu that he agreed that "India-Israel relations are historic. I met this morning with the people from the Jewish community, American Jewish Committee, and they all appreciated that there is a deep recognition in Israel that India is the only country where anti-Semitism has never been allowed to come up, where Jews have never suffered and lived as an integral part of society,"

There is a close resemblance between both men. Modi and Netanyahu believe in the market economy and have embraced national policies that have aligned their countries to dominantly ethnic-religious states. Both are in confrontation with Islamic nuclear states. Along this vein, India is in conflict with nuclear Pakistan and Israel with the Iranian nuclear programme. Additionally, Modi and Netanyahu think that "Islamic terrorism" is the most dangerous. In the same month Modi met with Netanyahu, an arms deal worth US\$ 520 million was signed. Accordingly, Israel would supply India with anti-tank missiles. Another agreement on joint manufacturing was signed between India and the Israeli company, Rafael Advanced Defense Systems Ltd.

Modi always looked forward to building strong political and commercial ties with Israel. As early as 2006, Modi as Chief Minister of Gujarat responded to an invitation to visit Israel and take part in a conference on agricultural technology. Modi met with the head of the Indo-Israeli Chamber of Commerce

and held meetings with Israeli business people. On his visit to Tel Aviv, Modi promised that he would set a historical precedent and visit the Jewish state once he becomes the Prime Minister of India. That visit laid the foundation for constant relations. In addition to encouraging partnerships with Israel's successive governments, Modi advised departments in his state to study agriculture and water management systems in Israel.

Modi's interest in consolidating relations with Tel Aviv was not only based on his ideology, but was also motivated by the legacy of the ties he had built with Israel when was the Chief Minister of Gujarat. Then, he believed that Israeli investments played a key role in improving the economic situation in the state of Gujarat, with a GDP reaching as high as 13.4 percent compared to just 7.8 percent of the overall GDP of India. During his term, Israeli industries were the focus of Modi's attention. Huge tenders were awarded to Israeli contractors, including a semiconductor factory, a new port, and a water desalination plant. In Gujarat, Israeli agriculture, pharmaceutical industries, alternative energy, and IT companies prospered.

Modi represents a new generation of India's policy, which has faith in economic pragmatism. Modi established India's relations with countries around the world along the lines of a policy that aspires for economic growth. This approach is consistent with the deepening of relations with Israel, which has expertise in high-tech, agriculture, telecommunications, and security.

Modi's effort to maintain a healthy relationship with Israel as Chief Minister of Gujarat was praiseworthy. When he became the Prime Minister of India this relationship was expected to be more strengthened. So he decided to visit Israel to start a fresh and pragmatic relationship with Israel. Mr. Modi visited Israel in July 2017, the first visit by an Indian Prime Minister in 70 years. During the historic visit, the personal chemistry and the warmth between Mr. Modi and Mr. Netanyahu were apparent not only in their prepared remarks but also their repeated hugs. In their prepared speeches, both leaders described each other as, "my friend" and embraced each other three times. Like with all his foreign trips, since landing at Ben-Gurion Airport near Tel Aviv on the afternoon of 4 July, Prime Minister Modi had a hectic schedule of official, semi-official, social and diasporic engagements until he departed on 6 July for the G-20 Summit in Hamburg. Recognising the significance of the occasion, Israel went an extra mile to make Modi feel home and breaking the usual protocol requirements Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was with the Indian leader for almost the entire trip. Though he had visited Israel earlier as the Chief Minister of Gujarat, this visit had greater symbolism for both sides and he began his tour with an unscheduled visit to Mount Herzl to pay his respects to the founder of modern political Zionism, Theodore Herzl.

Both India and Israel are interested to strengthen their relationship. This is reflected when a new fast-growing Israeli Chrysanthemum flower was named after the Indian leader. Modi took time to meet Moshe Holtzberg, who was two years old, when his parents were killed in the 26/11 terror attacks in Mumbai in 2008. Modi addressed the overseas Indian community in a public event in Tel Aviv and hours before leaving Israel, he visited the military cemetery in Haifa where Indian soldiers who were killed during World War I were buried. For its part, Israel demonstrated its advanced mobile desalination technology during the Modi- Netanyahu walk about along the Mediterranean Sea.

Netanyahu's 2018 visit to India:

In January 2018, to commemorate 25 years of Indian-israeli relations, a highly televised visit of the Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu to India took place, during which both Netanyahu and India's Prime Minister Modi have exchanged mutual applauses. This visit was the first since the 2003 visit of Ariel Sharon to India. Netanyahu, accompanied by a 130-member delegation, the largest that has ever accompanied a visiting Israeli premier, wants to increase exports to India by 25 percent over the three years. Israel is to invest \$68.6 million in areas such as tourism, technology, agriculture and innovation over a period of four years, a senior Israeli official had said ahead of the visit.

During this visit, an official commemoration ceremony took place, that honoured the Indian soldiers who perished in the Battle of Haifa during World War 1 took place, where Teen Murti Chowk, representing

the Hyderabad, Jodhpur and Mysore lancers, was renamed 'Teen Murti Haifa Chowk', after the Israeli port city of Haifa. During the official visit by the Israeli Prime Minister, the two countries signed 9 MoUs in the fields of cyber security, oil & gas production, air transport, homeopathic medicine, film production, space technology and innovation. He also met with the heads of the Bollywood Movie Industry. Netanyahu's Indian visit also included effort to revive Rafael missiles for Delhi. Netanyahu was also the guest of honour, and delivered the inaugural address in India's annual strategic and diplomatic conference, Raisina Dialogue. Here he has highlighted various aspects of Israel's success story as a high-tech and innovation-based economy. He also spoke about challenges plaguing the Middle East, while expressing hope and optimism for the future of his country's relations with India. Notable leaders who attended his conference included Narendra Modi, Sushma Swaraj ex-foreign minister, former Afghan President Hamid Karzai, Indian Minister of State M J Akbar and Indian National Congress leader Shashi Tharoor.

Limitations on India-Israel Relations:

After Modi's visit to Israel a new relationship is developed between India and Israel. Irrespective of this development more steps should be taken in this direction because a number of factors are now working as barriers in the way of the healthy relationship between India and Israel. These factors are:

➤ The key current limitation on the development of the strategic relationship between Israel and India is the sharply differing view taken in New Delhi and Jerusalem regarding the nature of Iranian ambitions. For Israel, Iran and its allies represent a major strategic threat. Iran is openly committed to Israel's destruction and provides major direct assistance to organizations engaged in violence against Israelis – such as the Lebanese Hizballah and the Palestinian Hamas and Islamic Jihad groups. While the threat is not considered existential – at least for as long as Iran does not obtain the nuclear option it seeks – the challenge from Teheran is considered in Jerusalem to be the main threat Israel faces. India, by contrast, feels no threat from Iran, and maintains profitable relations with Teheran in a variety of important areas. These include development of Iranian gas fields. India has invested heavily in the development of the Iranian Farzad B offshore gas field. It is also a major importer of Iranian crude oil. Iran is the second largest supplier of crude oil to India. But while this relationship probably precludes an alignment of Israeli and Indian positions regarding Iran, New Delhi does not agree with Iran on a variety of important files. India is a notable opponent of the Iranian nuclear program, and India supports the presence of western forces in Afghanistan.

➤ An additional limitation remains the Indian position regarding the Israeli- Palestinian conflict. Unless and until there is at least a semblance of diplomatic progress, Indian sympathy for the Palestinians will continue to be a notable feature. However, the current Indian government appears willing to 'de-hyphenate' the issue, i.e maintaining a position sympathetic to the Palestinians while not permitting this to prevent the development of closer relations with Israel in other spheres. The fact that the Palestinian cause has in recent years lost some of its central importance in the rhetoric of Arab states facilitates this process, as does the fact that few Indian Muslims vote for Modi's BJP, which consequently has less reason to pay heed to their sentiments in this regard.

➤ There is an apprehension from different corners about Modi's visit to Israel. For instance Writing in *Saudi Gazette*, the Hyderabad-based Indian journalist Aijaz Zaka Syed drew a parallel between Hindutva and Zionism and called it 'an unholy nexus between the two ideologies of hate' and accused Modi of given an 'elaborate burial to the Palestinian cause'.

➤ Likewise, writing in *The Hindu*, a Carnegie scholar observed that historically 'India has projected Israel as an apartheid regime' and reflecting the Iranian angle, suggested that the Indian Prime Minister 'would not have made the visit to Israel had he calculated that such a trip would antagonise the Sunni Arab leaders who have shown concrete interest in India's growing market and improving regulatory environment'.

➤ Castigating Modi for 'not going to Ramallah', *People's Democracy*, the official organ of the Communist Part of India, described the bilateral relations as a 'pernicious alliance' **Conclusion:**

Overall, Modi's visit to Israel is set to inject the much-needed momentum to India-Israel relations, which have remained cold for a long time. The Modi effect is expected to not only transform New-Delhi-Tel Aviv relations, but also provide the impetus to India's domestic economic growth. Both sides expected much from the visit, with the belief that the Modi-Netanyahu chemistry is destined to take India-Israel relations to a higher stage. In a sense, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Israel visit had demystified the bilateral relations and brought them out of the tradition military-security paradigm and the accompanying secrecy. The generalities of the joint statement resulted in the focus being shifted to non-political and developmental dimension of the relations. Modi's economic-centric approach towards the wider Middle East continued in Israel and this would be a major step towards the 'normalisation' of Israel in India's engagements with the wider region. As it seeks closer ties with Iran and Saudi Arabia—the two rival and antagonistic powers in the Gulf region—India is also seeking closer ties with Israel as well as its Arab and Islamic neighbours. It is hoped that Modi will follow the same policy towards Israel in his second innings.

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