

India, Qatar ink five pacts



Prime Minister of Qatar Sheikh Abdullah bin Nasser bin Khalifa Al Thani with Prime Minister Narendra Modi prior to their meeting at Hyderabad House, in New Delhi on Saturday. Photo: *The Hindu*

New Delhi

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi yesterday expressed India's keenness to invest in hydrocarbon projects in Qatar during talks with his counterpart Sheikh Abdullah bin Nasser bin Khalifa Al Thani on key issues of energy, trade and security.

Modi and the Qatari Prime Minister, who is here on his first visit, discussed enhancing cooperation in defence and security, in particular in cybersecurity and agreed on joint action to tackle money laundering and terrorist financing. After the talks, the two sides inked five pacts including in the field of visas, cyberspace and investments.

Modi said the visit of the Qatari Prime Minister showed the growing bilateral ties with Qatar, which India has always

regarded as a "valued partner". "Go beyond buyer-seller relation"

The two leaders acknowledged that the current level of trade and investment was much below potential, External Affairs Ministry Spokesperson Vikas Swarup said, adding Modi highlighted the tremendous opportunities available for Qatari investment in India's infrastructure and energy sectors.

On energy cooperation, Prime Minister Modi said, "We should go beyond the buyer-seller relationship to include Joint Ventures, Joint Research and Development and Joint Exploration."

"Indian companies were ready to invest in both upstream and downstream projects in Qatar in the hydrocarbon sector."

Not only an important trading partner for India in the Gulf region, Qatar is also the largest supplier of LNG to it, accounting for 66 per cent of the total imports in 2015-16.

On his part, the Qatari leader invited India's participation in infrastructure and investment opportunities coming up in the wake of Qatar hosting the FIFA World Cup in 2022. He also welcomed Indian investment in the port sector of Qatar.

"He (Modi) outlined the various measures taken by his government to open up the Indian economy and welcome FDI. The two leaders identified civil aviation as a priority sector for enhancing cooperation," Swarup said.

Prime Minister Modi recalled that India imports

eight million tonnes of urea per year and said "we would welcome a long-term arrangement with Qatar for the supply of urea", the spokesperson said.

It was also conveyed that India could also meet Qatari needs in the area of food security, he said.

The two leaders also discussed the regional situation, particularly in Iraq, Syria and Yemen.

Swarup said five agreements were signed in areas such as visa exemption for holders of diplomatic, special and official passports; technical cooperation in cyberspace and combating cybercrime, letter of intent regarding negotiations on an agreement on grant of e-visa for businessmen and tourists, and an MoU between the Supreme

Committee for Delivery and Legacy of Qatar and CII.

Additionally, another MoU aimed at encouraging greater collaboration and exchange in the field of national ports management was also signed.

Earlier, National Security Advisor Ajit Doval called on the visiting dignitary.

While the visa pact will allow holders of diplomatic, special and official passport of the two countries to visa-free travel between the two countries, the 'protocol on technical cooperation in cyberspace and combating cybercrime' "adds an important dimension of bilateral technical cooperation in cyberspace and combating cybercrime to the existing framework agreement in the field of security signed on 10 November, 2008". (*The Hindu*)

Lion tamer mauled to death during live show



Representative picture

A crowd watched on in horror as a lion tamer was mauled to death during show in Egypt.

Footage shows trainer Islam Shaheen, 35, inside an enclosure with two trainers and three lions in Alexandria, in the north of the country.

As dance music is heard in the background, Shaheen, who had been a lion tamer for ten years, waved a large stick in the air beckoning one of the 200kg animals towards him, while another climbed a ladder.

The third lion then pounced on Shaheen, mauling his neck. The video, taken by an audience member shows the lion rearing on its legs and pinning the trainer to the ground.

As he lay motionless on the ground, the two other trainers rushed to help him and pull the lion off. Shaheen was rushed to Adalusian Salam hospital where he passed away days later.

He is said to have suffered a fractured skull, deep cuts to his face and neck, broken bones in his chest and abdominal bleeding.

The lion was a new addition to the show and brought over from South Africa. It was apparently in mating season, causing it to behave erratically, according to Yahoo News.

It has now been pulled from the show and will be examined by a vet. (*Independent*)

US returns ancient artefacts to Egypt

A treasure trove of ancient artifacts, including a mummy's hand disguised as a movie prop and a small sarcophagus, have been returned to Egypt by US customs in a crackdown on criminal gangs smuggling cultural treasures.

As part of an ongoing initiative to smash international smuggling networks, the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) repatriated five antiquities to Egypt in a ceremony at the nation's Washington embassy on Thursday.

Among the historical artefacts was a child-sized sarcophagus uncovered in a Brooklyn garage in 2009,

ancient figurines and a limestone carving of an Egyptian temple.

The items were recovered as part of the aptly named lengthy investigations, Operation Mummy's Curse

a n d

Operation Mummy's Hand, which turned up a real-life skeletal hand dating back to the 8th century AD.

According to ICE, the 1,200-year-old macabre discovery had been

"misrepresented as a science fiction movie prop."

"While we recognise that cultural property, art and antiquities are assigned a dollar value in the marketplace, the cultural and symbolic worth of these Egyptian

treasures far surpasses any monetary value to the people of Egypt," ICE director Sarah R Saldana said.

On behalf of his country, Egyptian Ambassador Yasser Reda thanked the US Department of Homeland Security.

" T h e

tireless work of these men and women may often go unseen," he said.

"But it is nothing short of vital for the preservation of ancient cultures from around the world." (RT)

