



सत्यमेव जयते

Embassy of India ASTANA

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Embassy of India ASTANA NEWSLETTER

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Prime Minister Modi Visits UAE

Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi paid a State Visit to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on February 10-11, 2018. Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan received him in Abu Dhabi on 10th February, 2018. The leaders affirmed their vision of a forward-looking comprehensive strategic partnership for prosperity, growth and security of the two countries. Crown Prince conveyed appreciation for the positive contribution made by the Indian community in development of the UAE.



The leaders agreed to strengthen cooperation in the sectors of civil aviation, green energy, climate change, skill development, security, defence, maritime security, and combating human trafficking, transnational crimes and drug trafficking. Acknowledging India's highly successful and cost-effective space programme, the UAE evinced interest in deepening cooperation in space exploration.



The leaders agreed to further strengthen trade and economic ties, particularly through diversifying non-oil trade. Prime Minister Modi welcomed the UAE's continued interest in investing in infrastructure development in India. Crown Prince welcomed the interest from Indian IT and technology companies in investing in the UAE, and encouraged them to use the UAE as a platform for expanding their businesses in the region. The leaders reiterated their common desire to transform the buyer-seller relationship in the energy-sector to one of deeper partnership with focus on investment and joint ventures in petrochemical complexes, and cooperation in joint exploration in India, UAE and third countries. They underlined the need for an institutional arrangement to promote Cruise Tourism between the two countries. Prime Minister Modi welcomed the decision to award a major oil concession to ONGC-led consortium from India in the ADMA-OPCO field in Lower Zakum Concession, which is the first ever investment of an Indian company in the upstream sector of the Middle-East.

Prime Minister Modi visited Wahat Al Karama Memorial on 11th February, 2018. He witnessed laying of foundation stone for Swaminarayan Temple off Abu Dhabi - Dubai highway, which would be the first Hindu temple in Abu Dhabi. He unveiled the model of the temple and thanked the Crown Prince for donating land to build the temple.

He addressed the Indian Community in Dubai. He said that Indian community sowed the seeds of their dreams along with the dreams of local people with the same commitment and the result is that India experiences a very good partnership with the people of the gulf countries. He spoke about the efforts made by the Government of India to bring about economic growth in India.

He delivered a key note address on the theme "Technology for Development" at the sixth World Government Summit in Dubai. India was the Guest Country of Honour at the Summit, which was attended by more than 4,000 participants from 140 countries. In his address, Prime Minister Modi highlighted the importance of assimilating technology with governance to ensure equitable growth and prosperity for all. He stated that India is aspiring to assume leadership position in artificial intelligence, nano, cyber security and cloud computing.

He met H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of UAE and Ruler of Dubai. They discussed expanding cooperation in trade, investment, defence, security, and people-to-people contacts. Prime Minister Modi met Prime Minister of Kyrgyzstan Mr. Sapar Isakov and Prime Minister of France Mr. Édouard Philippe on the sidelines of the Summit. He interacted with the business leaders from Gulf Cooperation Council countries and visited the Museum of Future.

Five Agreements/MOUs were signed during the visit for acquisition of 10% participating interest in the offshore Lower Zakum Concession, establishing multi-modal logistics park and hub in Jammu, and cooperation in the fields of rail, financial services and employment.

Prime Minister Modi Visits Palestine

Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi visited Palestine on 10th February, 2018. He transited through Jordan for the first ever Prime Ministerial visit from India to Palestine. President Mr. Mahmoud Abbas received him in Ramallah.

The leaders discussed steps to strengthen the traditionally close and friendly relations between the two countries. They also discussed recent regional and global developments related to peace and security of Palestine and its peace process. Prime Minister Modi assured that India is ready to render necessary assistance to the development of Palestine. President Abbas conferred the highest civilian award of Palestine "Grand Collar Honour" on Prime Minister Modi.



At the joint press conference, Prime Minister Modi appreciated the remarkable courage and perseverance displayed by the people of Palestine in the face of constant challenges and crises. He commended them for moving ahead against the difficulties and challenges and appreciated their spirit and faith in their efforts for a better tomorrow. He expressed hope that Palestine would soon become a sovereign and independent country in a peaceful atmosphere.

He said that the two countries have cooperation in the areas of training, technology, infrastructure development, project assistance and budgetary support. He underscored that training and scholarship slots for Palestine in leading Indian educational institutions of various fields such as finance, management, rural development and IT had recently been extended. He informed that an exchange between the youth delegations of India and Palestine was introduced last year and announced an increase in the number of persons under the youth exchange programme from 50 to 100 from this year. He visited the Mausoleum and Museum of late President Yasser Arafat.

Six Agreements/MOUs were signed during the visit on setting up of India-Palestine Super Specialty Hospital at Beit Sahour in Bethelhem Governorate at the cost of US\$ 30 million, construction of India-Palestine Centre for Empowering Women "Turathi" for US\$ 5 million, setting up of National Printing Press at Ramallah at the cost of US\$ 5 million, construction of schools in Muthalth Al Shuhada Village costing US\$ 1 million and in Tamoon village in Tubas Governorate at an expenditure of US\$ 1.1 million, and providing assistance of US\$ 0.25 million for construction of additional floor at Jawahar Lal Nehru School for Boys at Abu Dees.

Prime Minister Modi Visits Oman

Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi paid a State Visit to Oman on February 11-12, 2018. His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said received him in Muscat on 11th February, 2018.

They exchanged views on bilateral, regional and global issues of common interest. They noted that the historically close bilateral ties between India and Oman involving vibrant maritime trade and cultural exchanges have expanded into strategic partnership based on trust and mutual respect. They emphasized the importance of expanding trade and investment ties to drive the strategic engagement forward.



They agreed to enhance cooperation in the sectors of IT and IT-enabled services, financial services, tourism, space, renewable energy, culture, healthcare, defence, security, cyber security, maritime security, law enforcement, anti-money laundering and prevention of transnational organized crimes. Prime Minister Modi invited Omani Sovereign Wealth Funds and private businesses to invest in India. He reiterated India's invitation to Oman to participate in building strategic oil reserves in India.

Sultan Qaboos encouraged collaboration of Engineering, Management and IT Institutions of India with Omani Educational Institutions. He appreciated India's remarkable achievements in ensuring food security for its people and called for greater bilateral cooperation aimed at developing agriculture and fisheries sectors in Oman. He conveyed his deep appreciation for the role and contribution made by the Indian community for the progress and development of Oman, noting that Indian citizens are highly respected for their peaceful and hard-working nature.

Prime Minister Modi addressed the Indian community from the Royal Box at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Muscat. He shared India's growth story and highlighted the vision of a new India. He interacted with leading businesspersons of Oman on 12th February, 2018. He visited the historic Lord Shiva temple, which was constructed 125 years ago by the merchant community from Gujarat. He also visited the biggest mosque in Oman, the Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque, which was built from 300,000 tonnes of Indian sandstone sculpted by Indian craftsmen.

8 Agreements/MOUs were signed during the visit on legal and judicial cooperation in civil and commercial matters; visa exemption for holders of diplomatic and official passports; health; space; academic and scholarly cooperation; tourism; military; and foreign service training.

Finance Minister Presents General Budget 2018-19

Finance Minister Shri Arun Jaitley presented the General Budget 2018-19 (April 2018 - March 2019) in Parliament on 1st February, 2018. The budget was guided by the mission to strengthen agriculture, rural development, health, education, employment, MSME and infrastructure sectors. Finance Minister Jaitley said that a series of structural reforms would propel India among the fastest growing economies of the world and the country is firmly on course to achieve over 8% growth as manufacturing, services and exports back on good growth path.

Total expenditure during 2018-19 is estimated to be Rs. 24.42 lakh crore (US\$ 376 billion), which is an increase of 13.7% over previous year. Continuing Government's path of fiscal reduction and consolidation, Finance Minister Jaitley projected a fiscal deficit of 3.3% of GDP.

Referring to the Government's commitment to double the farmers' income by 2022, Finance Minister Jaitley announced a slew of new schemes and measures. He proposed to set up Animal Husbandry Infrastructure Development Fund (AHIDF) for financing infrastructure requirement of animal husbandry sector and Fisheries and Aqua Culture Infrastructure Development Fund (FAIDF) for fisheries sector with a total corpus of Rs.10,000 crore (US\$ 1.5 billion). He announced a scheme "Operation Greens" with an outlay of Rs. 500 crore (US\$ 77 million) to address the challenge of price volatility of perishable commodities such as tomato, onion and potato. He proposed to increase the Institutional Farm Credit to Rs. 11 lakh crore (US\$ 169 billion) in 2018-19 from Rs.10 lakh crore (US\$ 154 billion) in 2017-18.

He announced setting up of an Agri-Market Infrastructure Fund with a corpus of Rs. 2000 crore (US\$ 307.7 million) for developing and upgrading agricultural marketing infrastructure in 22000 Grameen Agricultural Markets and 585 APMCs. Terming Bamboo as 'Green Gold', he unveiled a Re-structured National Bamboo Mission with an outlay of Rs. 1290 crore (US\$ 198.4 million) to promote bamboo sector in a holistic manner. He announced that more than 10 million houses would be built by 2019 in rural areas to fulfill the target of housing for all by 2022.

He allocated Rs. 1.38 lakh crore (US\$ 21.2 billion) for health, education and social protection for 2018-19, which reflects a hike of 13% from previous year. He proposed a major initiative to step up investments in research and related infrastructure in premier educational institutions with a total investment of Rs. 1,00,000 crore (US\$ 15.3 billion) in next four years. He announced the world's largest government funded healthcare programme "National Health Protection Scheme" to cover over 100 million families providing coverage up to Rs. 5 lakh (US\$ 7650) per family per year for secondary and tertiary care hospitalization.

He made a budgetary allocation of Rs. 5.97 lakh crore (US\$ 91.8 billion) for infrastructure in 2018-19 reflecting an increase of 20.8% from previous year. Railways Capital Expenditure for the year 2018-19 has been pegged at Rs. 1,48,528 crore (US\$ 22.8 billion), a large part of which is devoted to capacity creation. Finance Minister Jaitley allocated Rs. 3794 crore (US\$ 584 million) for giving credit support, capital and interest subsidy, and promoting innovations in Medium, Small and Micro Enterprises (MSMEs). On cleaning the Ganga, he said that a total of 187 projects have been sanctioned for infrastructure development, river surface cleaning, rural sanitation and other interventions at a cost of Rs. 16,713 crore (US\$ 2.6 billion). He proposed to develop ten prominent tourist sites into iconic tourism destinations to further boost tourism. The Budget proposes to expand the airport capacity more than five times to handle a billion trips a year under a new initiative - NABH Nirman.

Finance Minister Jaitley stated that Department of Science & Technology would launch a Mission on Cyber Physical Systems to support establishment of centres of excellence for research, training and skilling in robotics, artificial intelligence, digital manufacturing, big data analysis, quantum communication and internet of things. He doubled the allocation on Digital India programme to Rs. 3073 crore (US\$ 471 million). To further broadband access in villages, he proposed to set up five lakh wi-fi hotspots to provide net connectivity to 50 million rural citizens. He set a disinvestment target of Rs.80,000 crore (US\$ 12.2 billion) for 2018-19.

He pointed out that attempts to reduce cash economy and increase tax net have resulted in increased collection of direct taxes and increase in the number of returns filed by tax payers. In order to reduce the corporate tax rate in a phased manner, he extended the reduced rate of 25 percent currently available for companies with turnover of less than 50 crore (US\$ 7.7 million) to companies reporting turnover up to Rs. 250 crore (US\$ 38.3 million). The budget proposals also provided relief to salaried tax payers and senior citizens. As buoyancy in the equity market has created a bias against manufacturing, leading to more business surpluses being invested in financial assets, he proposed to tax Long Term Capital Gains exceeding Rs. 1 lakh (US\$ 1530) at the rate of 10 percent.

Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi commented that this budget strengthens the foundation of New India. He stated that Ease of Doing Business as well as Ease of Living are in focus in the budget. He noted that savings for the middle class, new generation infrastructure for 21st Century India and assurance of better health are concrete steps towards Ease of Living.

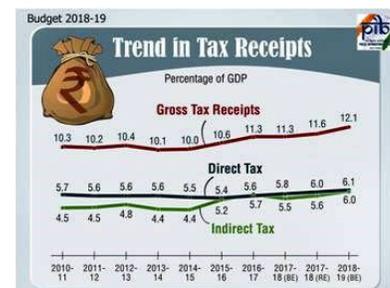
Budget 2018-19

Budget Snapshot: Key Numbers

Figures in ₹ crore	2016-17 Actuals	2017-18 Budget Estimates	2017-18 Revised Estimates	2018-19 Budget Estimates
Revenue Receipts	13,74,203	15,15,771	15,05,428	17,25,738
Capital Receipts*	6,00,991	6,30,964	7,12,322	7,16,475
Total Receipts	19,75,194	21,46,735	22,17,750	24,42,213
Total Expenditure	19,75,194	21,46,735	22,17,750	24,42,213
Revenue Deficit	3,16,381	3,21,163	4,38,877	4,16,034
Effective Revenue Deficit	1,50,648	1,25,813	2,49,632	2,20,689
Fiscal Deficit	5,35,618	5,46,531	5,94,849	6,24,276
Primary Deficit	54,904	23,453	64,006	48,481

*Excluding receipts under Market Stabilisation Scheme

PIB/KBK



The Embassy Celebrates the ITEC Day in Astana

The Embassy of India celebrated the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) Day in Astana at Hotel Radisson on 15th February, 2018. Ambassador Shri Prabhat Kumar welcomed the guests. In his address, Ambassador spoke about the ITEC programme administered by the Government of India as the flagship programme of its development cooperation by offering 10,800 slots to 161 partner countries and 13 multilateral agencies for training in 54 premier institutions in India every year as well as project related activities. He informed that about 1170 Kazakhstani citizens have availed of the short term specialized capacity building training programmes offered under ITEC since 1992. He underscored that the most number of professionals from Kazakhstan have attended the civilian ITEC courses this year out of last 10 years.



Dr. Assel Khasenovna, Senior Teacher, Astana Medical University, Astana; Mr. Yerbol Zeidullayev, Head of Hospitality Service Department, National Centre for Neurosurgery Hospital, Astana; Dr. Malika Myrzabayeva, Senior Lecturer, Saken Seifullin Kazakh Agrotechnical University, Astana; Ms. Bakytgul Imanbayeva, Teacher, Alas Tour Company, Astana; and Ms. Saule Kozubayeva, Assistant to the Chairman of the Central Election Commission of Kazakhstan on Issues of International Cooperation, Astana shared their experiences in their ITEC training programmes.

The Indian Cultural Centre, Astana presented a short cultural programme, followed by a buffet dinner. The India-Kazakhstan Flag Pins and Cups embossed with ITEC logo were presented to the ITEC alumni. About 80 people attended the celebration.

Ambassador Attends the first Tri-Regional Research Conference

Ambassador Shri Prabhat Kumar attended the opening of the first Tri-Regional Research Conference on Central Asia, South Asia and the Middle East on "Modern Trends of the East Renaissance" at the Eurasian National University, Astana on 14th February, 2018. He spoke in the plenary session of the conference.

The conference focused on challenges and prospects of the three regions, which are part of each other's extended neighbourhood. Within the framework of the Conference, the University initiated a new academic centre named "Centre for Strategic Research in Central Asia, South Asia and the Middle East". The Centre will support and expand opportunities for collaboration among scholars and students from the three regions, across academic disciplines.



Mr. Abuzar Khairi, Associate Professor, Jamia Millia Islamia University, New Delhi; Mr. Liyaqat Ayub Khan, Associate Professor and Mr. Vishwambhar Jadhav, Assistant Professor, University of Mumbai; Mr. Anurag Tripathi, Assistant Professor, Christ University, Bengaluru; and Mr. Ramakrushna Pradhan, Assistant Professor, Fakir Mohan University, Balasore also participated in the two-day Conference.

Seminar on "Yoga for Life" Organized in Astana

The Embassy and Yoga Family in Astana organized a Seminar on "Yoga For Life" at Hotel Radisson, Astana on 4th February, 2018. Ambassador Shri Prabhat Kumar inaugurated the seminar and spoke on the benefits of yoga for curing lifestyle ailments prevalent in modern society. The seminar focused on addressing lifestyle problems relating to spine, heart and diabetes. Ambassador presented certificates and khadi yoga kits to the yoga instructors and sponsors who partnered with the Embassy in organizing the 3rd International Day of Yoga in June, 2017. About 450 people attended the Seminar.



Kazakhstan Participates in Fed Cup Asia/Oceania Zone Group I Play Offs in New Delhi

The 2018 Fed Cup Asia/Oceania Zone Group-I - Play-offs were held in New Delhi from February 7-10, 2018. Two Pools consisting of 4 countries each participated in the tennis competition. Both India and Kazakhstan were placed in Pool A.

Kazakhstan secured first position and India secured third in the Pool A. The winner of Pool A, Kazakhstan, and the winner of Pool B, Japan, played against one another in the Promotional Play-off, which Japan won and it advanced to the World Group II Play-offs.



India, the Fastest Growing Domestic Aviation Market

India remained the world's fastest growing domestic aviation market for the third straight year in 2017 as economic and network expansion bolstered the sector, according to global airlines' body, International Air Transport Association (IATA). A report released by IATA on 5th February, 2018 says that the domestic Indian market posted the fastest full-year growth rate of 17.5 per cent.

The report underscores that many Indian carriers have embarked on ambitious expansion plans and have placed orders for over 900 aircraft. It notes that since late 2014, lower airfares have helped in boosting passenger growth, which in 2017 was also supported by broad-based pick-up in global economic conditions. Globally, Revenue Passenger Kilometres (RPKs) — a measure of passenger volumes — rose by 7.6 per cent in 2017, registering "above-trend growth" that was ahead of the ten-year average rate of 5.5 per cent. The IATA represents 280 airlines comprising 83 per cent of global air traffic.



Mandatory to Qualify NEET to Pursue Foreign Medical Course

Indian students who have obtained medical degree from an institution abroad and desirous to get permanent or provisional registration with Medical Council of India or State Medical Council to practice in India are required to qualify a Screening Test i.e., Foreign Medical Graduates Exam (FMGE). It came to the notice of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare that the Medical Institutions/Universities of foreign countries admit Indian students without proper assessment or screening of the students' academic ability to cope up with medical education which resulted in many students failing to qualify the FMGE.



Therefore, the Medical Council of India with the prior approval of the Government has amended the regulations making it mandatory for the Indian students to qualify National-Eligibility-cum-Entrance (NEET) to pursue foreign medical course. Therefore, Indian Citizens intending to obtain primary medical qualification from any medical institution outside India on or after May 2018, shall have to mandatorily qualify the NEET. The result of NEET shall be deemed to be treated as the Eligibility Certificate for such persons, provided that such persons fulfill the eligibility criteria for admission to the MBBS course prescribed in the Regulations on Graduate Medical Education, 1997.

India Joins the Ashgabat Agreement

Turkmenistan, the depository State of Ashgabat Agreement (Agreement on Establishment of an International Transport and Transit Corridor), informed that all the four founding members have consented to the accession of India to the Agreement and its accession would enter into force on 3rd February, 2018.



The Ashgabat Agreement signed by Iran, Oman, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan on 25th April, 2011, envisages facilitation of transit and transportation of goods between Central Asia and the Persian Gulf. The accession to the Agreement would diversify India's connectivity options with Central Asia and have a positive influence on India's trade and commercial ties with the region. India had deposited the Instrument of Accession with Turkmenistan in April, 2016.

Kazakhstani Professionals Participate in ITEC Programmes in India

Ms. Aida Orazbekova, Project Engineer, Tamur Software Development Company, Astana was selected for the course "Specialised Programme on Application Development using GIS and Remote Sensing" conducted by the Centre for Development of Advanced Computing, Noida from 11th December, 2017 to 2nd March, 2018; and Ms. Saule Kozubayeva, Assistant to the Chairman of the Central Election Commission of Kazakhstan on Issues of International Cooperation, Astana, was selected for the course "Capacity Development for Election Management" conducted by the India International Institute of Democracy and Election Management, New Delhi from January 8-19, 2018 under ITEC Programme funded by the Government of India.



Ms. Zhanna Zhanabekova, Manager, Aishuk Mereke Co., Astana and Ms. Sabira Kokayeva, Teacher of Informatics, School Gymnasium No.1, Almaty, were selected for the course "Certificate of Proficiency in English and IT Skills" conducted by the Aptech, New Delhi from 8th January to 18th March, 2018 under the ITEC Programme.

Incredible India Destination: Bijapur

The foundations of the historic city of Bijapur in the State of Karnataka were laid during the reign of the Chalukyan Dynasty (6th to 12th centuries). They called it 'Vijayapura' or the 'City of Victory'. This one-time capital of the Adil Shahi kings (1489-1686) is dotted with mosques, mausoleums, palaces, fortifications, watchtowers and strong gateways dominating the landscape for miles around. Bijapur experienced a great burst of architectural activity under the Adil Shahi rulers.

Ibrahim Rauza, Bara Kaman, Gol Gumbaz, Jala Manzil, Juma Masjid, Mehtar Mahal, Taj Bawdi, Upli Buruj, Malik-i-Maidan and Gagan Mahal are some of the major tourist attractions in Bijapur.

Ibrahim Rauza, built in 1627 contains the tomb of Ibrahim Adil Shah II and Queen Taj Sultana. It is said to have inspired the Taj Mahal. Bara Kaman with its 12 graceful arches is the mausoleum of Ali Adil Shah II.

Gol Gumbaz is the mausoleum of Muhammed Adil Shah. It houses the world's second largest dome, unsupported by pillars - an acoustic and architectural wonder. Built in 1659, its most arresting features are the seven-storied octagonal spires at the four corners and the heavy bracketed cornice below the parapet. The amazing whispering gallery distinctly echoes the faintest whisper 11 times.

Juma Masjid is the jewel of Adil Shahi architecture with its graceful arches, aisles, halls and large crowning onion dome. Jala Manzil was a water pavilion surrounded by secluded courts and gardens.

Mehtar Mahal is an ornamental gateway leading to a mosque and garden. Taj Bawdi is a water tank that commemorates Taj Sultana, Ibrahim Adil Shah II's wife. Upli Buruj is a 24 m high, 16th century watchtower built on high ground from which one can get a good view of the city and plains. Malik-i-Maidan is a 55-tonne cannon perched on a platform. Gagan Mahal was built by Ali Adil Shah-I in 1561 to serve the dual purpose of a royal residence and durbar hall.

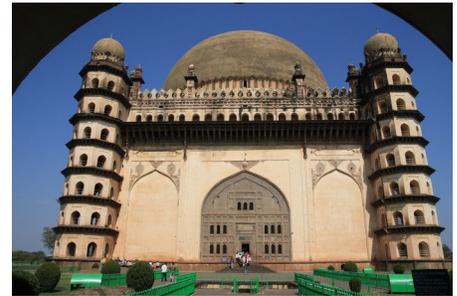
Kumtagi (16 km), Aihole (110 km), Badami (132 km), Pattadakal (148 km) and Gulbarga (159 km) are some of the major tourist attractions near Bijapur.



Ibrahim Rauza



Bara Kaman



Gol Gumbaz



Juma Masjid



Malik-i-Maidan



Gagan Mahal

PHOTO FEATURE

The Embassy Celebrates the ITEC Day in Astana

6/1, Kabanbay Batyr Avenue,
5th floor,
Kaskad Business Centre,
Astana.

Tel. Phone: + 7 7172-925700/925701
Fax: + 7 7172-925716
E-mail: info.astana@mea.gov.in



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