

While India's relations with Israel are growing strong, New Delhi has traditionally been sympathetic to the Palestinian cause. And PM Modi's visit to Palestine is an attestation that India's foreign policy is independent and freethinking.

India's Prime Minister Modi's visit to [Palestine](#) on Saturday is being hailed as a historic moment all around for two reasons. One, he is the first-ever Indian Prime Minister to visit Palestine. Two, the visit follows his trip to Israel in July 2017 — which was also the first by an Indian PM — and comes just three weeks after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's six-day visit to India.

The Palestinian Presidency on Wednesday welcomed the “historical and significant” visit of “grand guest” from India ahead of his visit to Palestine on February 10.

“Palestinians are very keen to build bridges with all [members of the] international community and [with various] international partners,” quotes Mahdi Abdul Hadi, a Palestinian political scientist based in East Jerusalem.

Palestinians are looking to boost their stature especially their claim to Jerusalem in the international community, in this context, the US President Donald Trump's unilateral decision to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital in December is significant.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas in New Delhi.  
Credit: Twitter/Gopal Baglay

“This is a way of ensuring recognition [for Palestine]. The (Indian premier's) presence in Palestine itself is an acknowledgment, a recognition. [But this does] not necessarily shows support or backing,” said Hadi, founder and head of the Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs.

Modi in series of tweets stated about his three-nation visit to Palestine, UAE & Oman.

I will be undertaking bilateral visits to Palestine, United Arab Emirates and Oman

from 9th to 12th February. The Gulf and West Asian region is a key priority in our external engagement. We enjoy vibrant multi-dimensional ties with the countries there.

— Narendra Modi (@narendramodi) [February 8, 2018](#)

He will be transiting through Jordan and meeting King Abdullah II in Amman on February 9, 2018

The Palestine visit will begin on 10th February after transiting through Jordan. I am grateful to His Majesty King Abdullah II of Jordan for facilitating the transit and look forward to meeting him in Amman on 9th February.

— Narendra Modi (@narendramodi) [February 8, 2018](#)

In [Oman and UAE](#), he will be addressing Indian diasporas and Indians who are cementing ties between the [West Asian nations](#) and New Delhi.

In both Oman and the UAE, I will have the opportunity to meet the large Indian diasporas that have made those countries their home. The Indian diaspora is a bridge of friendship between India and the Gulf countries.

<https://t.co/KUBK736sjz>

— Narendra Modi (@narendramodi) [February 8, 2018](#)

He will also interact with the top UAE and Arab CEOs in Dubai, this is seen as a measure by the policymakers to boost bilateral trade between two regions.

There will be interactions with leading UAE and Arab CEOs in Dubai on the vast economic opportunities in India and what more can be done together to increase

business collaboration.

— Narendra Modi (@narendramodi) [February 8, 2018](#)

The glimpses of Modi government's Maritime Diplomacy will be also seen at Oman, where Indian PM will hold talks with His Majesty the Sultan of Oman and other leaders.

Oman is a close maritime neighbour with whom we enjoy excellent relations. I will hold talks with His Majesty the Sultan of Oman and other leaders. There shall be interactions with businesspersons of Oman on developing stronger economic links with India. <https://t.co/GRqMmshHct>

— Narendra Modi (@narendramodi) [February 8, 2018](#)

While India's relations with Israel are strong, the country has traditionally been a friend of the Palestinians. New Delhi would like to show here that it has an independent foreign policy.

While India has very good relations with both [America](#) and Israel, [it voted against the US decision to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel at the UN in December.](#)

[Another example of India's independent foreign policy is its close relations with Iran, despite the distrust that exists between Tehran and Washington.](#)

Modi, who has visited the US five times since becoming prime minister, is also preparing for three more high-level visits to the Middle East before the end of the year: To Iran, Jordan and Saudi Arabia.

While Modi's visit to Israel focused on security-related issues, his visit to Palestine will focus on international legal issues, which will reflect a balance and independent status of New Delhi on entire Arab-Israeli issue

The talks are expected "to touch on the basis of international law when it comes to the recognition of Palestine at the UN (and to) Jerusalem as a shared city," he said.

On the other hand at Palestine, the Presidency announced that President Abbas and his

guest, Prime Minister of India, will hold a session of important talks, which will address the latest developments in the political process in the region because of the of India's strategic weight.

The statement said bilateral issues between the two countries and regional issues of relevance will be on the agenda.

"The Presidency said the visit will be a unique chance to express appreciation for India's ongoing support and positions that support peace and Palestinians' right to freedom and independence," the report said.

"The meeting will also discuss the regional and international situations of common concern, stressing that the visit will also be an opportunity to thank India for its continued support and support for peace and the right of our people to freedom and independence," the WAFA report said.

The visit will witness the signing of a number of bilateral agreements between the two countries "aimed at strengthening the bonds of friendship between the Palestinian and Indian peoples and enhancing cooperation in a number of important fields".

"President Mahmoud Abbas will hold a luncheon in honor of the grand guest of Palestine and his delegation, followed by a press conference for the two leaders," the report stated.

This will be the fourth meeting between PM Modi and President Abbas after their meetings on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in 2015 and in the Paris climate summit later that year and the Palestinian President's visit to India last year.

Since the historic visit of then President Pranab Mukherjee to Palestine in 2015, work on projects worth \$30 million in Palestine has commenced.

Apart from these, the visit is also aimed at deepening the huge bilateral ties, including cooperation in the areas of health, IT, tourism, youth affairs, sports, and agriculture.



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