

Friday, 20 November, 2020
Al Raya (Arabic Newspaper)

Dr. Deepak Mittal, Ambassador of the Republic of India
Dialogue - Ibrahim Badawi:

Qatar is committed to promoting workers' rights and safety.

- **Doha has taken a series of reform measures and progressive steps to protect employment**
- **We value Qatar for ensuring the safety of the Indian community during difficult times of the Corona epidemic**
- **\$ 600 million is the latest successful investment for the Qatar Authority in India**
- **Qatar facilitated the safe return of Indian citizens to it during the pandemic**

His Excellency Mr. Deepak Mittal, the new Ambassador of the Republic of India to the country, emphasized the strength of the historical and close ties between Qatar and India.

In his first dialogue since the presentation of his credentials, he expressed to Al-Raya his appreciation for Qatar's interest in the role that the Indian community plays in the process of construction and renaissance in the country, stressing that it is a fundamental pillar of the bilateral relations between the two countries.

He also expressed his welcome and appreciation of the series of reform measures taken by the State of Qatar to protect and promote labor rights, noting that they reflect Qatar's commitment and vision towards the rights and safety of migrant workers, appreciating its support for the Indian community during the global pandemic of the Corona pandemic.

His Excellency the Indian Ambassador said: His country's goal is to develop a comprehensive economic partnership with Qatar, as the volume of trade exchange reached about \$ 11 billion with successful Qatari investments for the Qatar Investment Authority in India.

He praised the achievements witnessed by Qatar and its regional and global role, which he described as a wonderful success story, expressing his country's appreciation for organizing and hosting the Afghan peace negotiations in Doha, which he said has become an exciting global capital and a vital center for sport, art and culture, while he considered the 2022 World Cup another jewel in the crown of Qatar, and others details are in the following lines.

The beginning of His Excellency the Ambassador, how did you receive the news of your appointment as Ambassador to Doha, and was this your first mission in the Gulf region?

It is an honor, a privilege and pride to represent my country in Qatar as an Ambassador. India and Qatar enjoy close and friendly relations based on strong foundations of shared history, culture and peoples' relations. More recently, leadership in both countries has strengthened bilateral ties. This is my first assignment as an Ambassador to the Gulf region. During more than two decades of my diplomatic career, I have had the opportunity to work in West Asia and the Arab region in the past. Besides, I have worked in Bangladesh, Vietnam and New Delhi in various positions. I felt completely at home when I was greeted with so much warmth and hospitality upon my arrival. I am honored that His Highness spoke positively about the Indian community, its activities and contributions when I presented my credentials as an Ambassador, and I felt very proud to hear such great words about India and the Indian community.

What is your impression of Qatar before and after your arrival there?

The story of Qatar's growth, its achievements in various fields, and its important regional and global role is a very wonderful story. I had the opportunity to make a short visit to Doha in 2016 on the occasion of the visit of the Prime Minister of India to Qatar. I was very impressed by what I saw at the time. Four years later, I can feel the rapid growth and progress Qatar has achieved. From a peninsula lined with pearl and fishing villages, Qatar has risen to become an exciting global capital

and a vital center for sport, art and culture. And modern architecture while preserving traditions. Qatar has come a long way in diversifying the economy, developing agriculture and livestock, and expanding shipping, including a focus on investing in human capital. The 2022 FIFA World Cup will add another jewel in the crown of Qatar, a historic moment as the first Arab country to host this kind of sporting event.

What are your priorities in your new mission in Doha?

Qatar and India enjoy close traditional relations. Leadership in both countries has excellent chemistry. There is regular participation. The strong Indian community in Qatar is an important pillar. We have witnessed steady and robust growth in our multifaceted cooperation over the past years, including in the fields of energy, trade, investment, education and culture.

How did you find Qatar's handling of the Corona pandemic and its care for the Indian community?

My team at the Embassy also focuses on caring for the community. I took over during the tough times of the COVID-19 pandemic. We are grateful to the leadership and authorities in Qatar for their support of the Indian community and for ensuring their safety and well-being during these difficult times. We also express our thanks for the excellent cooperation by the Qatar Civil Aviation Authority and other relevant authorities of the Qatari government to facilitate the smooth return of stranded Indian citizens. The Qatari authorities have also been supportive in facilitating the safe return of Indian citizens to Qatar. We will continue to participate in more measures in the future as well.

- **Promising prospects for cooperation in trade, investment, energy and healthcare**
- **Qatar and India are important partners in supporting each other's energy and food security**
- **\$ 10.9 billion is the volume of trade exchange and our goal is to develop a comprehensive partnership**
- **Qatar has come a long way in diversifying its economy, developing agriculture, and transportation**
- **We have witnessed steady and robust growth in our multi-faceted cooperation over the past years**

What is your assessment of the development of bilateral relations between the two countries?

India has a long history of friendly relations with Qatar based on strong foundations of common history, close business relations and contacts between the two peoples. The large Indian community acts as a catalyst for strengthening relationships. There is growing synergy in energy, health care, trade, investment and other sectors. The Prime Minister of India and His Highness enjoy a close and personal friendship, which has led to the revitalization and strengthening of the already strong bilateral ties. Last year 2019 was celebrated as the Qatari Indian Year of Culture, and it generated a lot of positive emotions. This provides an opportunity to build on in the coming period and to enhance further communication.

What are the prospects for Qatari-Indian cooperation in the coming period?

Qatar and India are working together on some of the world's most pressing challenges, from combating climate change to terrorism, from public health to Internet governance and food sufficiency. We believe that there is a huge potential in the bilateral relationship which has yet to be realized. This includes developing a comprehensive partnership in the fields of energy, strengthening investment, diversifying bilateral trade, expanding partnership in health care, building synergies in education and technology, expanding cooperation in technology and financial technology, and promoting more cultural contacts. Our bilateral cooperation is of great importance

in promoting peace and stability in the region and the world at large. Qatar's drive for self-sufficiency and the Indian government's "Aatmanirbhar Bharat" initiative complement each other. I see a lot of potential for further strengthening our multi-faceted cooperation, including in the areas of trade, investment, energy, health care, security, agriculture, technology, culture, sports, among others.

What about the volume of trade exchange and the most prominent exports and imports?

There is an active commercial relationship between Qatar and India. Bilateral trade totaled 10.95 billion US dollars during the 2019-2020 fiscal year. India is among the top three export destinations for Qatar and it is also among the top three destinations for imports of Qatar. The main exports of the State of Qatar to India include liquefied natural gas, liquefied petroleum gas, chemicals, petrochemicals, plastics, aluminium manufactures, and others, while India's main exports to Qatar include grains, copper materials, iron and steel products, vegetables, fruits, spices, food products, textiles and clothing, chemicals, precious stones, rubber and others.

What are the potentials for enhancing commercial relations?

There is huge potential for further improving trade and investment cooperation. We see great potential for strengthening cooperation in the pharmaceutical sector, as India plays a pioneering role, especially during the ongoing epidemic that has made India the title of 'the world's pharmacy'. India and Qatar remain important partners in supporting each others energy and food security. We have seen new trends in investment. We hope to build on this in a way that is mutually beneficial. Our goal remains to develop a comprehensive economic partnership between the two countries.

What are the chances of increasing Qatari investments in India?

The Investment Promotion and Facilitation Agency in India and the Indian National Investment and Infrastructure Fund are in constant contact with the Qatar Investment Authority to understand investment opportunities in both countries. Online seminars are held frequently by Indian Chambers to present many investment opportunities, especially in sectors such as real estate, construction, roads, highways, airports, airlines, ports, railways, LNG, petrochemicals, fertilizers, tourism, hospitality, agricultural infrastructure, cold stores, storage and dedicated agricultural ports. Most recently, the Qatar Investment Authority invested \$ 150 million in BYJU'S, an online education technology company, and \$ 450 million for a 25.1% stake in a unit of Adani Transport, and raised \$ 750 million from the sale of the stake.

What is the future of Joint Cooperation with Qatar in the energy and liquefied gas sector?

India seeks to transform the bilateral relationship in the energy sector from the current seller-buyer relationship to a more inclusive one. To this end, the Embassy is trying to attract Qatari investment in the activities of the hydrocarbon sector in India and also provide an opportunity for Indian companies to be part of the Oil and Gas sector in Qatar.

How do you view Qatar's efforts and mediation for the sake of peace in Afghanistan and the importance of that to India?

India appreciates Qatar's role in organizing and hosting the intra-Afghan negotiations in Doha. The Indian Minister of External Affairs had actually participated in the opening ceremony of the talks and made clear India's support for peace, security and stability in Afghanistan.

- **Qatar's achievements and its regional and international role is a remarkable success story**
- **Doha has become an exciting global capital and a vibrant center for sport, art and culture**
- **India appreciates Qatar's role in organizing and hosting the Afghanistan peace negotiations**
- **The 2022 World Cup will add another jewel in the Qatar crown**

How did you find Qatar's preparations for the 2022 World Cup?

Football is the third most popular sport in India. India has evolved from a single sport nation into a multisport nation. I wish the State of Qatar all the best in organizing the tournament and I expect more Indian fans to visit it. The sportsmanship and connection between people that is created by any mega sporting event is far beyond any other metrics. The Generation Amazing initiative, which was created as part of Qatar's successful bid to host the 2022 World Cup, officially opened its first stadium on Indian soil in Jamsheer State in Punjab, and in December 2019, two new football stadiums and a school were opened in India. Indian companies and workers have actively participated in building the structure. Football Infrastructure 2022. The Indian community is the largest in Qatar and they have interests in the success of this mega event.

What do you think of the steps Qatar has taken to promote workers' rights?

We welcome and appreciate the series of reform measures and progressive steps taken by the State of Qatar to protect and promote the rights of the workforce in Qatar. It reflects its commitment and vision towards migrant workers' rights and safety. We continue to work with local authorities to ensure Indian workers are sponsored and we are glad to have good and prompt cooperation from the Ministry of Administrative Development, Labor and Social Affairs.

What is the number of the Indian community in Qatar, and in what sectors do they work?

It is estimated that there are more than 700,000 members of the strong Indian community living in peace in Qatar. A large number of them form part of the work force participating in various professions, especially the construction sector, in addition to Doctors, Engineers, Teachers, Physiotherapists, Scientists, Accountants, Financial Professionals, Consultants, Bankers, IT Professionals, Jewelers and Office Managers, and a number of Indians who have proven themselves as businessmen. I am proud to say that the Indian community in Qatar is an important pillar of the bilateral relations between Qatar and India. The relationship between the two countries is highly regarded for their dedication, hard work, technical expertise, family values and law-abiding nature.