

## MODI'S VISIT TO KUWAIT

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi embarked on an official visit to Kuwait, marking a significant moment in the diplomatic relations between India and the Gulf nation. The visit, which took place as part of a broader engagement with the Gulf region, was aimed at strengthening bilateral ties, exploring opportunities for economic cooperation, and addressing regional security concerns. It was also a key step in reaffirming India's strategic partnership with Kuwait, one of the most important countries in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).

India and Kuwait have had a long-standing relationship, deeply rooted in trade, people-to-people connections, and cultural exchanges. The visit provided an opportunity for PM Modi to enhance this partnership, focusing on a variety of key sectors, particularly trade and investment, energy, and labour.

Kuwait, a major player in the global energy market, is one of India's most important energy suppliers. Both leaders recognized the importance of energy security and agreed to explore new energy cooperation avenues, including the possibility of setting up joint ventures in sectors like petroleum refining, renewable energy, and natural gas.

The two countries also discussed the possibility of enhancing cooperation in infrastructure development, particularly in areas where Indian expertise could be leveraged. Modi's visit emphasized India's role as a key partner in the Gulf region's economic development, and Kuwait's importance as a crucial partner for India's energy security and economic growth.

A major aspect of PM Modi's visit was the focus on the Indian diaspora in Kuwait. India has a significant community of expatriates in Kuwait, many of whom are employed in the construction, healthcare, and service sectors.

PM Modi acknowledged the invaluable contributions of the Indian diaspora to Kuwait's development and to the strengthening of bilateral relations. He also raised concerns regarding the welfare of Indian workers, particularly in terms of labor rights, working conditions, and remittance services. He stressed the need for enhanced cooperation on labour issues, ensuring fair wages and better living conditions for Indian workers. The Indian government has been actively involved in initiatives to safeguard the rights and well-being of its citizens working abroad, and this issue was a critical point of discussion.

During the visit, Modi also addressed the importance of skilling and training programs for Indian workers, aimed at making them more competitive in the job market, both in Kuwait and globally. The establishment of joint skill development centers and increasing collaboration between Indian and Kuwaiti industries in the workforce development sector were key components of the discussions. Another significant outcome of the visit was the mutual recognition of the need for closer security cooperation between India and Kuwait. With the Gulf region being a hub of geopolitical activity, both nations acknowledged the importance of counter-terrorism, maritime security, and defense cooperation in ensuring regional stability. Kuwait, while maintaining a neutral foreign policy, recognized India's role as a regional power and a partner in maintaining peace and security in the Indian Ocean region and beyond. Both leaders expressed their commitment to strengthening multilateral cooperation in the context of countering extremism, cybersecurity, and defense. Additionally, India and Kuwait agreed to further enhance their defense ties through joint exercises, training programs, and intelligence-sharing mechanisms. In addition to diplomatic and economic discussions, PM Modi focused on cultural diplomacy and enhancing people-to-people connections.

# Kuwait Mai Modi Modi: Strengthening of India-Kuwait bilateral ties

OMKAR DATTATRAY

Much after visiting America, Russia and other big countries, Modi embarked on a historical and first visit to a Muslim country-Kuwait where Modi Modi shouts echoed the air and reverberated and the prime minister India's visit after more than four decades is epoch making and has great bearing on the bilateral relations between India and Kuwait. There were chants of Modi Modi everywhere in Kuwait and it showed the popularity of Indian Prime Minister even in a Muslim country. Modi in fact scripted a diplomatic and bilateral history by visiting Kuwait and the visit strengthened the relations and ties between the two countries possessing two diverse cultures. Modi was recently on a two-day visit to Kuwait at the invitation of Emir Sheikh Meshal Al-Jabar. India, Kuwait elevate ties to strategic partnership following PM Modi's talks with top leadership. In their discussion, the two leaders focused on boosting ties in areas of information technology, pharmaceuticals, fintech, infrastructure and security. The last Indian Prime Minister to visit Kuwait was Indira Gandhi in 1981. Prime Minister Modi was on a two-day trip to Kuwait from Saturday -December 21, 2024 in what was the first visit to the Gulf nation by an Indian Prime Minister in 43 years. The Ministry of External Affairs -MEA, announced the visit and said it will provide an opportunity to further strengthen the "multifaceted" ties between India and Kuwait. Modi said, "Kuwait, India poised to transform relationship into strategic partnership. PM Modi highlighted Indian diaspora's contribution to Kuwait, emphasized potential for strategic partnership in energy and trade. PM Modi said the diaspora has filled Kuwait's canvas with the colors of Indian skills and assured that India has the manpower, skills and technology needed by a 'New Kuwait'. PM Modi who visited Kuwait on the invitation of its Emir addressed a gathering of the Indian community here. India and Kuwait signed a memorandum of understanding on Sunday the last day of the visit of PM Modi to Kuwait. Both India and Kuwait condemned cross border terrorism as well as the terror in all forms and manifestations. Both the countries signed an agreement for promoting defense and security cooperation. During his address to the Indian diaspora in Kuwait, Mr Narendra Modi, PM articulated a vision for India as a future hub of global development and a global growth engine. Speaking at the "Hala Modi" event at the Sheikh Saad Al -Abdullah indoor sports complex, he highlighted India's rapid advancements in technology, infrastructure, and sustainability, asserting

that the nation is now fifth -largest economy globally and a leader in fintech with the third-largest startup ecosystem. He emphasized the extensive progress made in telecommunications, noting that the length of optical fibre laid in the past decade equates to eight times the distance between the Moon and Earth. He underscored the potential for collaboration between Indian startups and Kuwait in sectors such as fintech, healthcare, smart cities, and green technology, positioning India as a prospective skill capital able to meet global demands. He also acknowledged the vital role of the Indian diaspora in strengthening India-Kuwait relations, expressing gratitude to Mr. Sheikh Meshal Al -Ahmad Al Jabar Al -Sabah, the Amir of Kuwait, for the invasion that marked the first visit of an Indian Prime minister to Kuwait in over four decades. He praised the contributions the Indian community, which have garnered recognition from both the Kuwait government and society. The prime minister discussed shared goals between India and Kuwait, emphasizing their mutual focus on innovation and economic development. He invited the diaspora to participate in upcoming events in India, including the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas, in January 2025, reinforcing the importance of their engagement in the journey towards a developed India and the strengthening of cultural ties between the two nations. Kuwait bestowed highest honor, 'The Order of Mubarak Al Kabeer' to PM Modi. This is the 20th international honor given to Mr. Modi by Kuwait government. The Kuwait government on Sunday December 22, 2024 bestowed its highest honor, 'The Order of Mubarak Al Kabeer' to prime minister Narendra Modi. The Order is awarded to Heads of state and foreign sovereigns and to members of foreign royal families in sign of friendship. It has been previously awarded to foreign leaders like Bill Clinton, Prince Charles and George Bush. India, Kuwait elevate ties to strategic partnership following PM Modi's talks with top leadership. In their discussions, the two leaders focused on boosting ties in areas of information technology, pharmaceuticals, fintech, infrastructure and security. India and Kuwait elevated their relationship to a strategic partnership after PM Modi held extensive talks with Kuwait Emir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al -Jaber Al-Sabah. At the invitation of his highness the Amir of state of Kuwait, Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al -Jabar Al -Sabah, Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi paid an official visit to Kuwait on 21-22 December 2024. This was his first visit to Kuwait. Prime Minister Modi attended the opening ceremony of the 26th Arabian Gulf

Cup in Kuwait on 21st December 2024 as the 'Gust of Honor' of His Highness the Amir of Kuwait. His Highness the Amir of the state of Kuwait Sheikh Meshal Al -Ahmad Al-Jabar Al-Sabah and his Highness Sheikh Sabah Al Khaled Al-Sabha Al -Hamad Al-Mubara Al-sabah, Crown Prince of the state of Kuwait received PM Shri Narendra Modi at Bayan Palace on 22 December 2024 and was accorded a ceremonial welcome. Prime Minister Modi expressed his deep appreciation to His Highness the Amir of the state the of Kuwait for conferring on him highest award of the state of Kuwait "The Order of Mubarak Al Kabeer." The leaders exchanged views on bilateral, global, regional and multilateral issues of mutual interest. Given the traditional, close and friendly bilateral relations and desire to deepen cooperation in all fields, the two leaders agreed to elevate relations between India and Kuwait to a "Strategic Partnership". The leaders stressed that it is in line with the common interests of the two nations and for mutual benefit of the two peoples. Establishment of a strategic partnership between both countries will further broad base and deepen our long-standing historical ties. Prime Minister Narendra Modi held bilateral talks with the Amir of the Kuwait State -the Prime Minister of Kuwait. In the light of newly established v strategic partnership, the two sides reaffirmed their commitment to further strengthen bilateral relations through comprehensive and structured cooperation in key areas including political, trade, investment, defense, security, energy, culture, education, technology and people -to-people ties. The two sides recalled the centuries -old historical ties rooted in shared history and cultural affinities. They noted with satisfaction the regular interactions at various levels which have helped in generating and sustaining the momentum in the multifaceted bilateral cooperation. Both sides emphasized on sustaining the recent momentum in high-level exchanges through regular bilateral exchanges at Ministerial and senior -official levels. The two sides welcomed the recent establishment of a Joint Commission on Cooperation -JCC between India and Kuwait. The JCC will be an institutional mechanism to review and monitor the entire spectrum of the bilateral relations between the two countries and will be headed by the foreign ministers of both countries. To further expand our bilateral cooperation across various fields, new Joint Working Groups -JWG's have been set up in areas of trade, investments, education, and skill development, science and technology, security and counter -terrorism, agriculture, and culture

in addition to the existing JWG's on Health, Manpower and Hydrocarbons. Both sides emphasized on convening the meetings the JCC and JWG's under it at an early date. Both sides noted that trade has been an enduring link between the two countries and stressed on the potential for further growth and diversification in bilateral trade. They also emphasized on the need for promoting exchanges of business delegations and strengthening institutional linkages. The two sides unequivocally condemned terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, including cross-border terrorism and called for disrupting of terrorism financing networks and safe havens, and dismantling of terror infrastructure. Expressing appreciation of their ongoing bilateral cooperation in the area of security, both sides agreed to enhance cooperation to counter-terrorism operations, information and intelligence sharing, developing and exchanging experiences, best practices and technologies, capacity building and to strengthen cooperation in law enforcement, anti-money laundering, drug trafficking and other transnational crimes. The two sides also discussed ways and means to promote cooperation in cyber security, including prevention of use of cyberspace for terrorism, radicalization and for disturbing social harmony. PM Modi congratulated His Highness the Amir on Kuwait's assumption of the presidency of GCC this year and expressed confidence that the growing India-GCC cooperation will be further strengthened under his visionary leadership. The following documents were signed /exchanged during the visit, which will further deepen the multifaceted bilateral relationship as well as open avenues for newer areas of cooperation. MoU between India and Kuwait on cooperation in the field of defense was signed. -1- Cultural exchange Programme between India and Kuwait for the years 2025-2029. -2- Executive Programme between India and Kuwait on cooperation and in the field of sports for 2025-2028 between the Ministry of youth and public Authority for Youth and Sports, government of the state of Kuwait. -3- Kuwait's membership of international Solar Alliance-ISA. To sum up it can be said that the most recent visit of PM Modi to Kuwait will boost and strengthen the bilateral ties between the two countries. In fact after America, Russia, there were the chants of Modi Modi reverberating in the air of Kuwait and the ties between India and Kuwait will have a quantum jump in near future.

(The author is a columnist, social and KP activist)

MOHAMMAD HANIEF

Kashmir is bracing for tough months ahead as changing weather patterns, owing to diminishing signs of rain and snow and phenomenally rising temperatures in winter season in Kashmir, will strike a blow to the region's ecology and economy.

Kashmir's persistent dry weather is taking a toll on its air quality, water resources, and economy, leaving residents and environmental experts deeply concerned. December 2024 has witnessed a staggering 79 percent precipitation deficit, with no snow in the plains and reduced snowfall in higher altitudes.

Over the years, the region has seen less rainfall and snowfall. The Meteorological Department says this is happening because winter temperatures are rising. December, when temperatures are usually sub-zero, has experienced average day temperatures of around 13 degrees Celsius.

Experts link this prolonged dry spell to climate change, which is disrupting the valley's delicate seasonal cycles vital for agriculture, water supply, and daily life. The ongoing dry spell and shortened winters are clear indicators of climate change. These shifts disrupt hydroelectric projects, agriculture, and even the tourism sector;

which are all lifelines of Kashmir's economy.

Environmental experts suggest that the lack of timely snowfall means glaciers aren't replenished, threatening long-term water security for the region. Farmers are being forced to shift from traditional paddy fields to less water-intensive crops like fruit orchards.

The dry weather, combined with vehicular emissions and the use of heating devices, has caused a surge in respiratory illnesses. Srinagar's Air Quality Index (AQI) recently reached 183, labelled as "Unhealthy," with PM2.5 levels at 119.7  $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ -far above safe limits.

Winter tourism, a cornerstone of Kashmir's economy, is reeling under the impact of insufficient snowfall. Destinations like Gulmarg are seeing fewer visitors, and if this trend continues, it will significantly harm local economy.

Faced with the mounting challenges, many residents are turning to prayers, seeking relief from the unrelenting dry spell. The crisis calls for the urgent need for climate-resilient policies in agriculture, sustainable energy management, and improved pollution controls to protect the valley's fragile ecosystem and its people.

Kashmir recorded an unusual weather pattern this winter. Many saw it as a fall-out of the global El Nino effect, which set off warmer weather patterns during winters in other parts of the world too. In



Kashmir, the peak winter months of December and January mostly passed without heavy snowfall, especially in the plains of the Valley during last winter season as well.

The warm weather spurred early blooming of flowers and orchards, especially apples. Experts worry that early flowering of apple orchards could have an impact on apple industry this year, as the fruit's size and colour could be affected.

The apple industry contributes 6.5% - 7% to the Gross State Domestic Product of Jammu and Kashmir; with over 35 lakh people dependent on it. Jammu and Kashmir accounts for 73% of the total apple production in the country at around 22 lakh tonnes. Many now fear a fall in

production this year as they wait to see the effects of the disrupted winter.

Over the years, the region has seen less rainfall and snowfall. The Meteorological Department says this is happening because winter temperatures are rising. The winters in Kashmir have been unusually warm. Despite the variability in weather patterns, like the colder December in 2023 with a bit of snow in high places, the first half of the month received less rain than usual.

Chillai Kalan in Kashmir is typically snowy, but in 2023 it has been quite dry. This marks the third winter in the last ten years without snow, especially after 2014. Researchers say there might be 30% to 70% less snow by the end of this century,

indicating that the changing climate in Kashmir could have long-term impacts.

The alarmingly depleting glaciers that feed the water bodies of the region are adding to the crisis, warning of acute water shortage in the years to come. A renowned geology expert in his new research finding warns of 68% glacial loss by the century's end. It highlights an annual mass reduction of 35 centimeters in over 1,200 glaciers in the Himalayan region between 2000 and 2012 due to the worsening climate change.

The adverse impacts of a dry season on the region's water ecosystems particularly on Dal Lake which is home to many migratory birds and the lifeline of the residents and houseboat owners, whose economy is dependent on it.

The plants and animals in the region are facing difficulties due to the changing climate. Species that are native and accustomed to the usual weather are finding it tough to adapt to the environmental changes. The natural balance that helped different forms of life in Kashmir is now at risk, and this might create issues for the interconnected web of life.

Even animals that rely on snow for their sustenance would face an existential crisis. Animal species like mountain goats might have to go hungry or will be compelled to search for newer places as snow is essential for their food and shelter in the winters.

Less snow means that temperatures would be warmer and water bodies would begin to dry up, and this can cause various issues for the survival of both animals and humans as in Kashmir, when the snow on the mountains melts in the beginning of summer, it gives water to our rivers and streams. If there isn't sufficient snow, people in the lower areas will have issues.

Snow plays a crucial role in Jammu and Kashmir's winter. Many people depend on it because when it melts in spring, it provides water to millions in the region, making up 75% of their water supply. In June, many parts of Kashmir experienced a shortage of rain, almost like a drought. The Irrigation and Flood Control Department suggested farmers grow crops like maize instead of rice to cope, but not everyone followed the advice.

Even in hilly places like Gurez, Karmah, Keran, and Mughal Road, which usually get a lot of snow in winter, there has been little or no snow. Popular tourist spots like Pahalgam, Sonamarg, Doodhpathri, Yusmarg, and others in Kashmir, as well as Baderwah, Kishtwar, Poonch, and Rajouri in Jammu, have also received much less snow compared to previous years.

The crisis calls for the urgent need for climate-resilient policies in agriculture, sustainable energy management, and improved pollution controls to protect the valley's fragile ecosystem and its people.

## Need for Transparency in Dogri Language Recruitment-A Call for Fairness and Accountability

MOHD. YASEEN

The recruitment process for the position of Editorial Executive/ Newsreader-cum-Translator (Dogri) conducted by Prasar Bharati has left many of us questioning the integrity and fairness of the procedures. As a candidate who participated in the recruitment process, I feel compelled to voice my concerns. These concerns go beyond personal grievances-they represent a larger issue that affects the future of the Dogri language and the credibility of institutions responsible for its representation.

As a cultural activist who has long been committed to the promotion and preservation of Dogri, I found myself facing a recruitment process that, in many ways, seemed disconnected from the values it was supposed to uphold. The very language that is dear to millions, that carries the weight of centuries of history, culture, and pride, was reduced to a recruitment formality that, at times, appeared more about appearances than substance.

Having participated in the written examination, voice test, and interview for the role, it became evident that there were several aspects of the process that raised questions. One of the most glaring concerns was the lack of transparency in the setting of the question paper. How can candidates trust a recruitment process when the very foundation of the examination is shrouded in secrecy? Who was respon-

sible for crafting the question paper, and what measures were in place to ensure its integrity? These are questions that, to this day, remain unanswered.

It is obvious that the content of the question paper was, at many places, a clear violation of the AIR Code and the policies of the public broadcaster. The question paper, which was meant to assess the capabilities of the candidates, seemed to be entirely unaware of the principles that guide a public broadcaster like Akashvani. This oversight is deeply concerning, as it compromises the integrity of the recruitment process and raises doubts about the qualifications of those who prepared it. Furthermore, the interview process also left much to be desired. The Dogri language is not just a medium of communication-it's a vessel of cultural expression. Therefore, when a recruitment process involves evaluating candidates' proficiency in Dogri, it is vital that the panel comprises qualified language experts who truly understand the nuances and depth of the language. However, there was no clarity on who the language experts on the panel were, or what criteria were used to select them. This lack of transparency in the selection process calls into question the fairness of the entire recruitment.

Another issue that has raised concerns is the method used to communicate the results of the recruitment process. Informal channels like WhatsApp were used to notify candidates about their selection status. While technology can be a useful

tool, relying on informal platforms to announce the outcomes of an official recruitment process undermines its seriousness. It is crucial that results of such significance are communicated through formal, professional channels such as official emails or letters. The use of WhatsApp, particularly with delayed notifications for non-selected candidates, created confusion and undermined the transparency of the process. It is also worth mentioning that candidates who were selected were informed two or three days in advance, while those who were not selected were only notified later through WhatsApp. This delay and the inconsistency in communication further fuel suspicions of a lack of fairness and transparency.

It is my belief that the issues I've raised are not merely procedural shortcomings-they represent a deeper systemic problem within the recruitment process. The credibility of an institution like Prasar Bharati, which is responsible for representing India's cultural diversity, depends on the transparency and fairness of its recruitment processes. If we cannot trust these processes, then the entire foundation on which such institutions are built is at risk.

In the case of Dogri language representation, this is even more critical. Dogri is not just another language-it's the heart and soul of millions of people from the Duggar region. Its preservation and promotion are of utmost importance, and it is disheartening to see a recruitment process that seems to overlook

the language's cultural significance. The selection of candidates with little to no experience in the field, possibly based on favoritism or connections, is an injustice to those who have spent years honing their skills and contributing to the growth of the language and its cultural landscape.

I am not alone in raising these concerns. Several respected individuals and organizations, including Adv. Dogra Harish Kaila, President of Nami Dogri Sanstha, have expressed similar grievances. It is essential for institutions like Prasar Bharati to realize the implications of such decisions. When qualified, experienced individuals are overlooked in favor of unqualified candidates, it sends a damaging message to the larger community. It implies that merit takes a backseat to personal connections or favoritism-a practice that must not be allowed to continue.

It is time for Prasar Bharati, and other similar institutions, to recognize that the future of regional languages like Dogri lies in the hands of those who genuinely care for their preservation. Fairness, transparency, and merit must guide every decision, especially when it comes to recruitment for roles that directly affect the language's representation in the media.

To restore the trust of the public and the candidates involved, I have taken the step of filing an RTI (PRBHA/RE/24/01019) seeking clarity on the recruitment process. I believe that only through

transparency can we rebuild faith in the system and ensure that similar issues do not arise in the future. This is not about questioning the outcomes of the recruitment-this is about ensuring that the process is fair, transparent, and in line with the values that Dogri represents. Prasar Bharati has a responsibility not only to the candidates but also to the language and the people it serves. Dogri is not just a linguistic medium-it is a representation of a people's identity, history, and culture. If we want to ensure that Dogri continues to thrive, we must demand a recruitment process that reflects the dignity and respect this language deserves. The preservation and promotion of Dogri language cannot be left to chance or the whims of a few. It is a collective responsibility-of cultural organizations, language experts, the media, and the people of the Duggar region. Institutions like Prasar Bharati must play an active role in this by ensuring that their recruitment processes are not only transparent but also aligned with the cultural importance of the languages they represent.

If we are to protect the future of Dogri, we must start by demanding accountability and fairness in every step of the recruitment process. Only then can we be sure that the language and its people are truly being given the respect they deserve.

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