

ISSN 0970-7247

THIRD CONCEPT

English Monthly
Annual Subscription Rs.200

Vol. 39

No. 457

MARCH 2025

Rs. 20.00

- ❖ **India's Act East Policy and China Factor**
- ❖ **India: Voice of the Global South in QUAD**
- ❖ **Educational Status of Women in Manipur**
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Vol. 39 No. 457 MARCH 2025 Rs. 20.00

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Published, Printed and Owned by
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Qatar's Emir Visit to India

Emir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al-Thani visited India during February 17-18, 2025 for the second time after March 2015. His visit has been speculated in Indian media to bring bigger investments from the Qatari sovereign fund that intent to explore Indian market. Indian Prime Minister held bilateral meeting to strengthen trade ties. Emir had brought high-level delegation consisting of Ministers, officials and business leaders which reveal the intentions of further enhance the existing engagement.

A joint communiqué was issued on the occasion in which together they acknowledged historic trade linkages, deep-rooted people-to-people ties and robust bilateral relations. They also expressed their desire to further expand and deepen the multifaceted bilateral relations and signed “Agreement on the Establishment of Bilateral Strategic Partnership” and reaffirmed their commitment to regular and structured cooperation in all areas including political, trade, investment, security, energy, culture, education, technology, innovation, sustainability and people-to-people ties. Both sides signed the revised Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement and agreed to expedite negotiations on the India-Qatar Bilateral Investment Treaty.

Trade has been the strong pillar of bilateral economic cooperation and carries further potential for future growth and diversification in bilateral trade. Two sides agreed to elevate the existing Joint Working Group on Trade and Commerce into a Joint Commission on Trade and Commerce; an institutional mechanism to review and monitor the entire spectrum of economic ties. This institution shall be headed by Ministers of Commerce of respective countries. A Joint Business Council also held its meeting earlier on February 13, 2025. Both sides also agreed to explore strategies for enhanced and diversified trade and ways to enter into a bilateral ‘Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement’ and agreed to double bilateral trade by 2030. Qatar Investment Authority (QIA) has agreed to open an office in India. Qatar also announced on the occasion to invest USD 10 billion in India. Thus, the bilateralism between the two countries mostly revolved around trade, investment and business. Accordingly, the interaction between the two countries was comprehensive, inclusive and in areas of mutual interests.

Significance that India accords to Qatar is revealed in gesture of Prime Minister Modi who personally welcomed Sheikh Tamim at the Air Force Station in Palam on February 17, 2025. The meeting was marked by warm embrace which reflected the deep ties and strong partnership the two countries share. Later, Ministry of External Affairs shared on X: “A special gesture for a special friend!” Modi himself acknowledged on X, saying he went to airport to welcome his brother and wished him a fruitful stay in India.

Visit of Emir took place in the backdrop of ongoing negotiations between Israel and Gaza (Hamas) in which Qatar is playing a key role in facilitating the same. The negotiation has led to exchange of hostages and prisoners. Significantly, Doha is the seat of Hamas representatives and the Qatar royalty plays an influential role in the power dynamics of the middle-east.

The return of the former Indian Navy personnel is impending. Eight former Navy personnel were arrested in Qatar on charges of espionage in August 2022. These prisoners were initially handed death sentence, subsequently commuted on December 28, 2023 after Indian diplomatic interventions. Out of seven persons convicted six have returned to India as they were released in February 2024; the last person is yet to be sent back by Qatar. Hopefully, the renewed bonhomie between the two would help return of the last man.

Indians constitutes the largest expatriate community of Qatar and has been contributing in the progress, growth and development of the country. Hence, the substantive engagement and regular exchange of high-level bilateral visits have further strengthened the ties.

— BK