

Respected Mr....

Ladies and gentlemen,

First of all I would like to thank the members of the Symbiosis Institute of International Studies for providing me with this opportunity to be among you at this Conference and to present some views on certain issues. Let me also ~~like to~~ express my special gratitude to Dr. Vidya Yeravdekar, Principal Director, of the Symbiosis Institute, and Dr. Rajani Gupte, Vice Chancellor of the Symbiosis International University for inviting me to this conference. *Dr. mujumdar -chan. , بچو*

۱، ۵  
۵، ۹  
۱

Ladies and gentlemen,

The ties between Iran and India during their long, and shared history have created numerous points of strength for both countries. There are many commonalities between our two countries, whether it be in architecture, art, or language.

What I would like to do today is to highlight some of the areas in which India and Iran have common values, or shared interests, and where India and Iran may potentially broaden their ties. In doing so, I will highlight the fields which are ripe for further cooperation. Broadly speaking, greater cooperation may be had in the fields of culture, policy, ~~and~~ trade and investment.

One potential field for the expansion of relations and increasing cooperation is the cultural sector. It may be interesting to note that, even today, religious commentaries produced in India continue to be a source of

*decads ago*

reference for Iranian <sup>religious</sup> scholars. There is great potential for cooperation in the field of literature, film, music and handcrafts. *culture -*

In the field of politics, and in recent years, India and Iran strived to bring their views closer to each other on different regional issues by broadening their constructive regional cooperation and contacts. In this regard, their membership in the Non-Aligned Movement has provided a good opportunity for cooperation.

Iran and India are involved in several regional organizations, where in some cases Iran holds an observer-state status. For example, this is the case in regards to the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (or SAARC). Iran currently enjoys observer status in the SAARC and seeks to become a full member in the future. Membership in the SAARC would provide an opportunity for Iran to have more political and economic cooperation with other member countries. The biggest need of the SAARC countries is to have access to the energy resources and Iran by enjoying enormous oil and gas reserves can meet this need. Iran's entrance and involvement in this Association will greatly facilitate developments in the transportation and communication sector, benefitting the SAARC's Members-States.

A similar observation may be made with respect to Iran's role and involvement in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, where India is also *going* <sup>to be</sup> a member.

Iran and India are also members of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) which is an international organization consisting of

coastal countries bordering the Indian Ocean. Iran would like to expand its relationship with India within the framework of this organization as well.

Recent regional developments, particularly in Afghanistan, have brought the two countries very close to each other. This is particularly prevalent in their cooperation and mutual struggle against the Taliban – an effort which is ever-growing.

In view of its links with countries of the Middle East and the Persian Gulf region, India's role in this region is expanding and therefore, Iran and India can have more exchange of views. Likewise, many new, potential fields of cooperation may exist in Central Asia, the Persian Gulf, as well as the Pacific region.

In light of their commonalities, strengths and relative stability, Iran and India can cooperate with each other in combating extremism. Regarding the growing threat of ISIS in the region, the views of Iran and India are close to each other. Both countries consider the growth of religious intolerance to be dangerous for the region.

In the economic sector, the relations between Iran and India experienced growth both before and after the sanctions. Before the lifting of sanctions, most of the relations between the two countries were concentrated on oil. India was considered to be one of the leading buyers of Iranian oil. This cooperation grew even during the period of sanctions. It may even be said that the sanctions created a new environment of cooperation between them.

During the period of sanctions, Iran accumulated financial resources in this country which itself sparked an increase in economic and trade

cooperation. Traders and businessmen from both countries became more familiar with relevant business climate, and both countries witnessed an increase in business-related visitors.

There is great potential for cooperation and development of economic ties, particularly in the four fields of trade, energy, infrastructure as well as mines and metals.

In the field of trade, and in view of the existing capacities and oil income of Iran accumulated in India, as well as the proposal of India to give a credit line to Iran, there are extensive possibilities of trade between the two countries and to increase export from India to Iran.

Talks regarding basic agreements for facilitation of trade and investment like avoidance of double taxation as well as protection of mutual investment are going on which can provide ample support and encouragement to the traders and businessmen as well as investors of the two countries and PTA.

Energy is the second area which includes the on shore and off shore as well as the upstream and downstream industries and where there is an extensive scope of business and investment.

And now that we edge closer towards the removal of sanctions, the grounds for cooperation will increase. The same may be observed with respect to investment in the upstream sector, and investment by India in the Farzad B gas field, the talks about which are ongoing. We hope that India will get this project. Likewise in the downstream sector, in the field of investment in Indian refineries, the investment of India in the LNG sector and fertilizers and also in the production of the petrochemical products in

Iran; there is a suitable environment and in all these cases talks are ongoing.

Another important sector for cooperation between the two countries is the infrastructure and connectivity which includes participation and investment in the ports, roads, railways and airports construction. For many reasons, the connectivity sector is the meeting point of long term economic interests of the two countries. Cooperation and joint investment in the establishment of connectivity infrastructure will provide facilities for better access of India to the CIS countries, Afghanistan, and north Europe and, in fact, it can be said that India is the end user of the infrastructure in Iran.

Notable examples of the common connectivity interests of the two countries is the establishment and development of the international north-south corridor, and the trilateral transit corridor between Iran, India and Afghanistan. The presence and investment of India in the Chahbahar port would certainly result in the establishment of an extensive and long term economic infrastructure link between the two countries.

In the mines and metals sector as well, there are many possibilities of cooperation and Iran is intensely looking for attracting participation and cooperation of capable countries in this sector, particularly by India.

In addition to all which has been mentioned above, the geo-political situation of the two countries is a very important element for the strengthening of ties between them. The distance between the Chahbahar Port in the south east of Iran and the Mundra port in the west India is about 930 kms. This distance is much less than the distance between big cities

inside India, for example, compare this with the distance between New Delhi and Mumbai.

In addition to the potential grounds for cooperation between Iran and India, the development and expansion of economic cooperation between the two countries is faced with several impediments and challenges as well. One such impediment is the administrative and bureaucratic system of the two countries which moves at a very slow pace. Our proposal is that more and more bilateral visits and meetings at the highest level should take place so that increase in the political determination at the highest level ~~should~~ results in speeding up the executive process.

It seems that in spite of the ever-increasing cooperation in trade meetings and visits, there is still a lack of familiarity among the traders and businessmen of the two countries about the grounds of trade and cooperation available in each other's country. The way in this regard is the simplification of the procedures of the issue of multi-entry and long-term visas for the traders, businessmen and investors of the two countries. We have already simplified all the procedures for businessmen and investors. It seems that the Embassy of India in Tehran is also providing more visa facilities.

Another important point and worthy of attention of the Indian traders, businessmen as well as investors willing to do business with Iran and invest there is that they should not look at Iran merely as a country and a geographical entity for the purpose of business and investment. Rather, they should pay attention to the special position of Iran and its direct

proximity with 15 countries. They should look at Iran as a regional hub and a base for trade and export with all of its neighboring countries.

The policies of Iran after the nuclear deal and the removal of sanctions will be concentrated towards the expansion of cooperation with the countries of the region. This is an important point to bear in mind.

Now after the removal of the sanctions and the political determination of the President of Iran and the Prime Minister of India, as well as at the ministerial level of the respective countries, we hope that we will witness an expansion and betterment of relations between our countries more than before in all sectors of culture, economy and policy.

Thank you