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Saudi Crown Prince's Visit to India - Outcomes

Why in news?

Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia paid his first State visit to India. Click [here](#) to know more on India-Saudi ties.

What are the key outcomes?

- **Agreements** - The following Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) were signed during the visit:
 - i. MoU on investing in the National Investment and Infrastructure Fund of India
 - ii. Framework cooperation programme between Invest India and Saudi Arabia General Investment Authority (SAGIA)
 - iii. MoU on cooperation in the field of Tourism
 - iv. MoU on cooperation in the field of Housing
 - v. MoU for cooperation on Broadcasting for exchange of Audio-Visual Programmes
 - vi. Agreement for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to join the International Solar Alliance (ISA) launched by PM Modi
- **Defence** - More cooperation and collaboration in joint defence production of spare parts for Naval and Land systems as well as supply chain development was spelt out.
- **Strategic partnership** - The commitment to strengthen the 'strategic partnership' envisaged in the 'Riyadh Declaration' of 2010 was reaffirmed.
- It was agreed to elevate the existing 'Strategic Partnership' with high level monitoring mechanism by the creation of Strategic Partnership Council.
- This will be led by the Indian PM and the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, with support by ministerial representation.
- The council would cover the whole spectrum of security and strategic relationships.
- **Security** - A 'Comprehensive Security Dialogue' will be constituted at the

level of National Security Advisors to discuss counter-terrorism, intelligence-sharing and maritime security.

- A Joint Working Group on Counter-Terrorism will also be set up to enhance cooperation in counter-terrorism efforts.
- The two sides also agreed to work together with other Indian Ocean Rim Countries for enhancing maritime security and international trade.
- **Trade** - Importance of increasing the trade volume between the two countries and eliminating export barriers was stressed upon.
- Further deepening of trade and investment cooperation was agreed upon, by aligning Saudi's Vision 2030 and 13 Vision Realization Programs with India's flagship initiatives.
- **Investments** - Saudi welcomed Indian private/public sector investments and expertise in the upcoming mega projects in Saudi Arabia.
- It has expressed its interest in investing in infrastructure projects worth about \$26 billion.
- This is beyond its already committed investments of \$44 billion for the existing joint venture with the public sector oil undertakings and public fund investments of \$10 billion.
- **Energy** - The two sides stressed on continuation of the India-Saudi Arabia Energy consultations and expressed desire to develop the bilateral trade in energy sector.
- The buyer-seller relationship in the energy-sector would be transformed to strategic partnership, focusing on investment and joint ventures in petrochemical complexes.
- It comes as an acknowledgement of Saudi Arabia as the world's most reliable supplier of oil & gas and the key supplier to India.
- Saudi Arabia also takes part in India's Strategic Petroleum Reserves (SPRs) (huge stockpiles/emergency stores of crude oil).
- Potential cooperation in the renewable energy sector in investment as well as in Research and Development was recognised.
- **Skill Development** - A Joint Working Group on Skill Development would be set up to identify areas of cooperation for mutual benefit.
- **Terrorism** - The joint statement of the two sides condemned the recent Pulwama terror attack.
- It acknowledged that disputes between India and Pakistan must be resolved bilaterally.
- It also called on states to renounce the use of terrorism as an instrument of state policy.
- The need for concerted action by the international community against terrorism was also emphasized.
- It includes the early adoption of UN Comprehensive Convention on

International Terrorism, comprehensive sanctioning of terrorists and their organisations by the UN.

- **Haj** - The Crown Prince agreed to increase Haj quotas from India to 200,000, to reflect the latest census.
- He also agreed to release 850 Indians from Saudi jails after a plea from Indian PM Modi.

What is the irritant in the relations?

- India and Saudi Arabia have taken care over the past two decades to 'de-hyphenate' the relations from ties between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia.
- However, the Crown Prince's visit to Pakistan just before his visit to India, and the unrest over the recent Pulwama terror attack complicate matters.
- During his Pakistan visit, he praised Islamabad for its fight against terrorism.
- He also announced \$20 billion worth of investments, in addition to previously announced aid of \$6 billion in cash and reserves.
- Nevertheless, India-Saudi Arabia ties have been carefully built over the years, especially after the strategic partnership announced in 2010.
- So attempting to compare the outcomes of the visit to that of Pakistan only undermines the relations.

Source: The Hindu, MEA



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