

Remarks by EAM Dr. S. Jaishankar at the 2nd India-Arab Foreign Ministers' Meeting (January 31, 2026)

January 31, 2026

Excellencies, Colleagues,

Namaskar, a good afternoon and a warm welcome to India for the 2nd India Arab Foreign Ministers meeting.

We meet at an important juncture when the global order is undergoing transformation for a variety of reasons. Politics, economics, technology and demography are all fully into play. Nowhere is this more apparent than in West Asia or the Middle East, where the landscape itself has undergone a dramatic change in the last year. This obviously impacts all of us, and India as a proximate region. To a considerable degree, its implications are relevant for India's relationship with Arab nations as well.

Multiple developments, each of considerable consequence, have taken place in the Middle East/West Asia over the last few years. Many of them have reverberated well beyond the region. The situation in Gaza, in particular, has been the focus for the international community. Many of us were present at the Sharm-el-Sheikh Peace Summit in October 2025. This evolved into the UN Security Council Resolution 2803 of November 2025. Taking forward the comprehensive plan to end the Gaza conflict is today a widely shared priority. Various countries have made policy declarations on the peace plan, individually or collectively. This is the larger context in which we deliberate on the region's challenges and prospects.

There are a number of other situations in the region that also merit our collective attention. One is the conflict in Sudan that is exacting a deadly toll on its society. Another is that in Yemen, with the additional implication for the safety of maritime navigation. Then there is the concern about Lebanon, where India has troops committed to UNIFIL. Where Libya is concerned, all of us have an interest in advancing the national dialogue process. The direction of events in Syria is also critical for the well-being of the region. Contemplating this multitude of challenges, our shared interest warrants strengthening forces of stability, peace and prosperity.

A common threat in both our regions to these objectives is that of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. Cross-border terrorism is particularly unacceptable because it violates the basic principles of international relations and diplomacy. Societies targeted by terrorism have the right to defend themselves and will understandably exercise it. It is essential that we strengthen international cooperation to combat what is a global scourge. Zero-tolerance for terrorism must be an uncompromising universal norm.

Excellencies,

India has strong partnerships with all LAS nations, in many cases, maturing to a strategic level. Much of that is rooted in history, where we have long exchanged goods, people and ideas. In the contemporary era, this

collaboration has taken different forms with various partners. The region has some of our largest expatriate communities, key energy sources, major trade relationships and increasingly, emerging technology and connectivity initiatives. We are crucial to each other when it comes to food security and health security. Today's deliberations, while of a collective nature, will nevertheless give a fillip to many bilateral ties.

Colleagues,

The India-Arab Cooperation Forum serves as a platform to give our positive sentiments a practical shape. Our meeting will examine an agenda for such cooperation in 2026-28. It currently covers energy, environment, agriculture, tourism, human resource development, culture and education, amongst others. India looks forward to a more contemporary dimensions of cooperation being included, such as digital, space, start-ups, innovation, etc. We will also be contemplating working together on counter-terrorism and parliamentary exchanges. I note that we have launched the India-Arab Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture yesterday. These activities and initiatives will parallel what is happening in the bilateral domain and reinforce the bonds between us.

Excellencies and colleagues, in the last decade, India has developed many more capacities and strengths that are in keeping with the times. Many of these are technology related and their application has been people-centric. We believe that sharing experiences and best practices in that regard will be to our mutual benefit. I look forward to discussing that in detail and I am confident that our deliberations today will be really productive and outcome oriented.

New Delhi

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