

**Ministry of External Affairs
(WANA Division)**

Press Release

3rd Round of India-Palestine Foreign Office Consultations

The 3rd round of bilateral Foreign Office Consultations was held through video conference on 10 September 2020, led by Shri Sanjay Bhattacharyya, Secretary (CPV & OIA) and Dr. Amal Jadou Shakka, Deputy Foreign Minister of the State of Palestine.

2. Both sides comprehensively reviewed the bilateral relations, and also took stock of the progress achieved on decisions taken at the last Joint Commission Meeting held in Ramallah in November 2016 and during the historic visit of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi to Palestine in February 2018.

3. Reaffirming India's principled and consistent support to the Palestinian cause, Secretary (CPV & OIA) expressed the hope for early resumption of direct negotiations between Israel and Palestine to achieve a sovereign, independent, viable and united state of Palestine living within secure and recognized borders, side by side and at peace with Israel.

4. Both sides exchanged views on the Covid-19 situation and discussed the steps being taken to address the public health and socio-economic challenges posed by the pandemic. Dr. Shakka thanked India for Covid-related medical assistance and repatriation of Palestinians stranded in India through VBM flights.

5. They appraised the progress of 8 ongoing projects in Palestine implemented under a cumulative grant of USD 59 million, and agreed on fast-tracking them where feasible. These projects include construction of three schools, an IT park, a women empowerment centre, a diplomatic institute, and a super specialty hospital and supply of equipment for their national printing press. Both sides will sign additional protocols for extending the time-lines of some of the projects in the coming weeks.

6. Education and capacity building cooperation is an important plank of India-Palestine relations. Apart from 150 ITEC slots and 100 ICCR scholarships given annually, the Government of India has been organizing several tailor-made training programmes for Palestinian government officials. The Indian side offered grant of scholarships to Palestinian students for degree courses in nursing, pharmacy, pathology, paramedics, etc. and internship programmes for their doctors in Indian hospitals.

7. Ministry of External Affairs will further sponsor training of Palestinian solar mamas at Barefoot College, Tilonia; organise an artificial limb fitment camp in

Ramallah in partnership with Bhagwan Mahaveer Viklang Sahayata Samiti (BMVSS); and undertake a number of quick impact community projects as per requirements of the Palestinian side.

8. Both sides exchanged views on issues confronting the broader West Asia region. Secretary (CPV & OIA) briefed Dr. Shakka about developments in India's neighbourhood.

9. They agreed on the importance of continuing the upward momentum in the relationship through exchange of regular visits, and bilateral meetings on the margins of international fora.

10. Dr. Shakka accepted Secretary (CPV & OIA)'s invitation to visit India next year for the fourth round of Foreign Office Consultations.

New Delhi
September 10, 2020