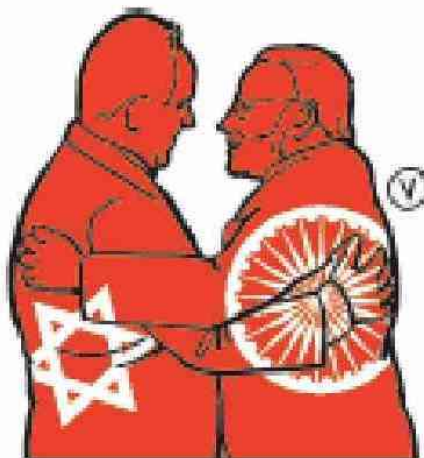


For a Friendship That Brokers Peace

It is welcome that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's visit, which commemorates 25 years of diplomatic ties between India and Israel, has seen further deepening of bilateral relations and that India's vote against Israel at the UN (opposing US President Donald Trump's move to recognise Jerusalem as Israel's capital) has not come in the way. Israel has been a supplier of critical military technology. So, PM Narendra Modi has done well to invite Israeli firms to take advantage of the liberalised FDI regime in the defence sector to Make in India. Investing in R&D here will enable these companies tap into the ready pool of engineers and scientists. The need is also for India to learn from Israel and develop a strong indigenous defence manufacturing base.



Not unexpectedly, the nine-odd pacts include a five-year work plan for strategic cooperation in agriculture, water and innovation. Israel has demonstrated strength in these areas. And there is dire need for India to raise both farm productivity and farmers' incomes. Joint R&D projects in cyber-security space and big-data analytics in healthcare are in order, given our weaknesses in the cyber security space. Pacts in the oil and gas sector for collaboration in the upstream sectors, R&D in future technologies and startups in oil and gas are welcome.

The joint statement reaffirms their support for an early resumption of peace talks between Israelis and Palestinians to arrive at a "comprehensive negotiated solution on all outstanding issues, based on mutual recognition and effective security arrangements, for establishing a just and durable peace in the region". The joint statement is unequivocal on taking strong measures to counter terror attacks. Presumably, that would cover the cyber kind as well.