

Greatly looking forward to Israel visit, says Modi

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NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday said he was “greatly looking forward” to his “unprecedented visit” to Israel that is to start on Tuesday, which will bring Asia’s third largest economy and the tiny Jewish nation together.

In a departure statement issued on the eve of his visit—the first ever by an Indian prime minister since India formally recognized Israel in 1950—Modi said he will have talks with Israeli leaders covering the “full spectrum” of their partnership that has thrived on security cooperation and collaboration in agriculture.

India established diplomatic ties with Israel in 1992. It has since balanced ties with Arab countries where it has a sizeable diaspora presence and deep energy ties on one hand and Israel on the other.

Modi will not travel to Ramallah, the seat of the Palestinian Authority and a customary stop for visiting leaders trying to maintain a balance in political ties. But India did host Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas in New Delhi last month, though that visit was seen as low key.

With his 4-6 July trip, Modi is making public India’s deep ties with Israel that span military, counter-terrorism, agriculture, water conservation, innovation and cyber security.

As a rare and special gesture, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu will receive Modi when he arrives at Ben Gurion airport on Tuesday, the Israeli media reported on Monday.

Modi said he looks forward to “strengthening” the partnership in diverse fields for mutual benefit. “We will also have the chance to discuss major common challenges like

PM says talks with Israeli leaders will cover ‘full spectrum’ of partnership

terrorism,” he said.

“My programme during the visit gives me an opportunity to engage with a cross-section of Israeli society. I am particularly looking forward to interacting with the large vibrant Indian diaspora in Israel that represents an enduring link between our two peoples,” Modi said.

“On the economic side, I will join with leading Indian and Israeli CEOs and start-ups to discuss our shared priority of expanding business and investment collaboration on the ground. In addition, I hope to get insights into Israel’s accomplishments in technology and innovation through on-site visits,” he said.

“During my stay, I will visit the Yad Vashem Memorial Museum to honour the memory of the victims of the Holocaust that counts among the greatest tragedies in human history. Later, I will also pay my respects to the courageous Indian soldiers who laid down their lives during the liberation of Haifa in 1918,” he added.

Netanyahu, hailing what he described as Modi’s “historic visit”, said on Monday that he and the Indian leader have worked together over the past few years to build a “steadfast friendship” between Israel and India, *Reuters* reported.

“This visit will deepen cooperation in a wide range of fields—security, agriculture, water, energy—basically in almost every field Israel is involved in,” Netanyahu told his cabinet in public remarks.