

Mukherjee arrives in Saudi Arabia

Indian External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee arrived here Saturday on a two-day visit to deepen ties with Saudi Arabia, the most influential among Arab countries.

Mukherjee was received at the King Khalid International Airport by Saudi Arabian Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Nazaar Obaid Madani. Indian Prime Minister's special envoy in the Middle East Chinmay Gharekhan and Indian ambassador to Saudi Arabia M.O.H. Farook were also present.

Mukherjee is scheduled to meet King Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz at the Al Yamama Palace later Saturday.

In the evening, Mukherjee will lay the foundation stone of a Delhi Public School building. This will be followed by a reception at which he will meet representatives of the 1.5 million-strong Indian community in this Gulf nation.

The minister will call on Riyadh Governor Prince Salman Bin Abdul Aziz Sunday morning, followed by a meeting with Saudi Foreign Minister Saud Al-Faisal.

The minister and his delegation will leave for India at 3 p.m. Sunday.

The economic ties between India and Saudi Arabia have been growing at a steady pace in the past decade or so.

The two countries are now looking at strengthening the existing architecture for dialogue so that the two sides can have regular and candid exchanges at the political level on issues of concern and interest to both.

Indian officials pointed out that since this was the minister's first visit to Saudi Arabia, a number of issues in the region, like Iran, the Middle East peace process as well as the Iraq war will come up for discussion.

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