

## Egypt's Mubarak to visit India after 25 years

India is set to energise its political and economic ties with Egypt, a co-founder of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), when President Hosni Mubarak comes here on a four-day state visit Sunday - his first to the country after 25 years.

Mubarak, Egypt's ruler for nearly three decades, will be accompanied by five senior ministers and top business leaders on this important visit that seeks to impart a fresh momentum to bilateral ties.

He will meet President Pratibha Patil and will hold delegation level talks with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, the external affairs ministry said Wednesday while announcing the visit.

Mubarak's heavyweight delegation will include Foreign Minister Ahmed About Gheit, Information Minister Anass Ahmed Nabih El-Fiqqi, Communication Minister Tarik Mohamed Kamel Mahmoud, Information Technology Minister Rasheed Mohamed Rasheed and Trade and Industry Minister Gen. Omar Suleiman.

The visit will focus on elevating ties to a new level by intensifying strategic and economic cooperation between India and Egypt, pioneers of South-South cooperation and NAM.

It comes at a time when Egypt, North Africa's economic hub and an influential Arab country, is looking at India afresh as a knowledge power and wants to add more economic muscle to bilateral ties.

Bilateral trade between India and Egypt touched \$2.2 billion in 2006, compared to China's nearly \$3 billion trade with Egypt.

Several economic and cultural agreements are expected to be signed during the visit. The two countries are planning to more than quadruple bilateral trade to \$10 billion by 2010.

Top Indian entities like Essar, Reliance and the Tata group are planning investments in Egypt worth an estimated \$20 billion in areas ranging from oil and gas to plastics and fertilisers.

Egypt's strategic location makes it a gateway to the 20-country Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the 27-nation European Union and the Arab Free Trade Area.

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