

Modi effect on Indo-GCC ties

Under the leadership of Narendra Modi, India-GCC relations will scale new heights, observed Former Labour and Social Affairs Minister and Founding Chairman of Bahrain-India Society Abdulnabi Al Sho'ala while delivering his speech at the weekly meeting of Rotary Club of Manama at Gulf Hotel. (Excerpts of the speech given below).



Indian Ambassador Dr. Mohan Kumar, Bahrain-India Society Chairman Mohammed Dadabhai with Rotary Club officials and members. Inset: Mr. Al Sho'ala delivering the speech.

It is true that Modi's elevation as the Prime Minister of India has caused a concern among the people in the region, for many consider him as a fanatic fundamentalist Hindu, anti or at best ambivalent to Muslims in India.

He is accused of turning a blind eye in his capacity as the Chief Minister of Gujarat towards protecting the Muslims when sectarian riots erupted in the state in 2002. Although we acknowledge these detrimental factors, we can't have a myopic view regarding his accomplishments as a competent and practical administrator. Gujarat development model has won him accolades from many quarters including the World Bank. His government's agenda has always been economic reforms and pro-

business policies. As for the concern over his attitude towards the Muslims in India, he is well aware that to salvage his reputation - and his legacies, past and future - his entire 180 political legacy could very well rest on his treatment of the million Muslims in India. He cannot afford to antagonise or marginalise the second majority of his people. Despite the gravity of what has happened in Gujarat in 2002, Indian Muslims, or at least 15% of them, apparently saw the other side of Modi, which explains why BJP

have had more support from Muslims during the recent election than expected. In fact BJP won 71 out of 80 seats in the populous northern State of Uttar Pradesh, where Muslims are over a fifth of the population.

India and GCC

The GCC Countries, as a block, became India's No. 1 Trade Partner, well ahead of the EU, ASEAN and North America. Trade between India and the GCC already reached US\$175 billion, some sources put the figure at US\$206 billion. Further Opportunities of

expanding the Export of skills, products and services to projects worth more than \$450 billion which are expected to be launched in the GCC by the end of this year; \$70 billion in Qatar, \$85 billion in UAE, \$70 billion in Kuwait, in addition to KSA, Bahrain and Oman. Moreover, GCC Countries supply nearly 60 per cent of India's oil requirement. Not to mention of the seven to eight million Indians working in the Gulf, contributing positively to the development and economic growth of the region and remitting to India US\$ 30

billion annually. With more than 1.3 million active frontline personnel, 1700 military aircraft and 80 nuclear warheads, India has undoubtedly emerged the military heavyweight in the region.

GCC can't rely anymore on western powers (USA) now they consider them as unreliable allies.

Most Arab leaders wish to see a far more proactive India, There was, until now, reluctance from Delhi's part to adopt more assertive positions, for fear that such a move might arouse suspicions.

Indian leaders, so far, think that this issue is so sensitive that few of them are prepared to speak on the record.

In her history India did not have, and will not have, an Indian Alexander, or Indian Cyrus, or Indian Tariq bin Ziad, however Modi will change India's strategic culture.

He is well placed to stabilise security situation on the north, resulting in more focus to our region.

Modi will uplift India's Relationship with the GCC to mutual Strategic Partnership and will witness advanced cooperation on military matters.

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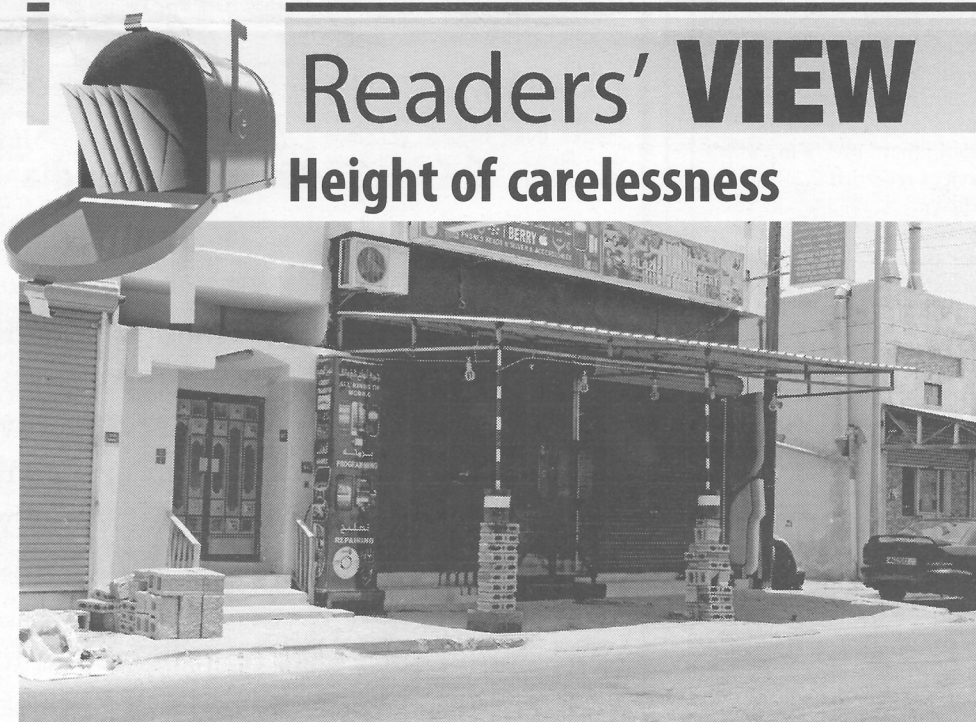
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Readers' VIEW

Height of carelessness

Dear editor,
The old saying tells "Prevention is better than cure", but it seems that no one has heard of such a phrase in Bahrain. Why do we have to wait until accidents occur to curb such practices? This sign board of a shop in Muharraq is

supported only by these two puny poles, which are placed in a very dangerous way that predicts deadly accidents. I can imagine a kid hitting one of the poles before the full sign tumbles down on his/her head. Where are the officials responsible for

observing these shops? Our kingdom has achieved plenty of accomplishments in all fields. Please correct me if I'm wrong! There must be an official body to ensure safety measures and standards are followed in all shops and buildings.
Thameem

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