

**WILL SIGN ECONOMIC, SECURITY, DIPLOMATIC PACTS: NETANYAHU**

# Pacts on table, PM in Israel to strengthen bilateral ties

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New Delhi, February 25

**AS INDIA AND ISRAEL** look to elevate their strategic partnership, Prime Minister Narendra Modi arrived in Tel Aviv Wednesday on a two-day visit. He is meeting Israeli counterpart Benjamin Netanyahu and the two sides are expected to sign a slew of pacts in the economic, security and diplomatic spheres to deepen bilateral ties.

Modi's visit to Israel is taking place amid turmoil in the region, talk of a potential US strike on Iran should negotiations fail in Geneva and US President Donald Trump's Board of Peace initiative to rebuild Gaza and deploy an international stabilisation force in the ravaged Strip. India has stayed away from the Board and attended its first meeting as an observer.

Modi was received by Netanyahu and his wife Sara at the Ben Gurion international



Prime Minister Narendra Modi addresses a special session of the Knesset, Israel's parliament, in Jerusalem, on Wednesday REUTERS

airport, and the two leaders held a private meeting there after. They will meet Thursday for official bilateral talks.

Modi, in a post on X, said, "Had an excellent meeting with PM Netanyahu. Expressed grat-

itude to him for the warm welcome earlier in the day. It is a delight to be back in Israel after nine years. We discussed a wide range of subjects aimed at boosting bilateral ties. Sectors such as technology, water man-

agement, agriculture, talent partnership and more offer immense scope for close collaboration. We also discussed key developments in the region."

"I am extremely honoured to be received by PM Netanyahu and Mrs Netanyahu at the airport. I look forward to engaging in bilateral discussions and fruitful outcomes that strengthen the India-Israel friendship," he said. Welcoming him, Netanyahu said, "This is a bond of real friendship! My wife Sara and I welcomed today our good friend, PM of India Narendra Modi, who has arrived for another historic visit to Israel. Prime Minister Modi previously visited Israel in 2017, and I later paid a reciprocal visit to India that was truly exceptional."

"We share a close personal relationship, speak often, and I believe that the deep friendship between us powerfully reflects on the ties between our two countries," he said.