

Sushma Swaraj reaches Israel on 2-day visit, to review bilateral ties

17/01/2016 19:56 by admin

TEL AVIV: External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj arrived here on a two-day visit to Israel and Palestine, some three months after the historic visit of President Pranab Mukherjee, the first by India's Head of State to the region.

Swaraj was extended a red carpet welcome on her arrival at the airport here by Israeli officials.

Swaraj's official engagement starts tomorrow morning in Palestine where she will be meeting with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and her counterpart Riyad al-Malki in the West Bank town of Ramallah.

She will also be offering floral tributes at the bust of father of nation Mahatma Gandhi in the Garden of Nations and lay wreath at the mausoleum of iconic Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat.

The minister will also be inaugurating the India-Palestine Digital Learning and Innovation Centre as part of capacity building efforts undertaken by the Indian government in Palestine.

After her engagements in Palestine tomorrow, Swaraj will be back in Israel in the afternoon to kickstart her two-day visit during which she will hold discussions with the top Israeli leadership to review a whole range of areas of cooperation between the two countries.

She will be meeting Israeli President Reuven Rivlin, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (who also retains the portfolio of foreign minister), Defence Minister Moshe Ya'alon, Minister of Infrastructure Yuval Steinitz and deputy Foreign Minister Tsipi Hotovely.

Many in Israel see Swaraj's visit as a "build up" to the much-anticipated visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to the region.

Netanyahu and Rivlin are also expected to visit India after having received invitations from Mukherjee in October during his visit to the region.

- PTI