

Expats split on the Modi roadshow

Indian PM to make historic UAE visit

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi is preparing to visit the UAE, the first Indian leader to do so in 34 years.

The trip, scheduled for August 16 and 17 in Abu Dhabi and Dubai, will culminate in an event organised by the Indian Community Welfare Committee at the Dubai Cricket Stadium, where 50,000 people are expected to attend.

But news of the Modi roadshow has met with a mixed response among Indian expats in the UAE.

Dilip Khatwani, a 51-year-old entrepreneur, said: "I think Narendra Modi has realised the importance of doing business in the Middle East and the fact that there are so many Indians here that are professionally not taken seriously."

By Veathika Jain

"I believe he also realises that a lot of money is being sent by the Indian community from here to India and that he needs to address his people in the UAE."

The sentiment was backed by Ackash Jain, 32, a business owner, who added: "I think it will send a positive message to the rulers and the people in UAE about the strengthening India-UAE ties."

But Michelle Silva, a communications professional, took a more negative view.

"I don't know how his visit is going to make a difference to my life or working Indian expats here," she said.

"I believe his trip is more corporate related, adding absolutely no value to the Indian working class."

"His speeches are impressive, but it doesn't mean there will be a change to the common Indian expats like labourers or professionals. He's here to meet the Indian elite."

On the issue of trade, several expats hope the visit will encourage start-up or small business owners in the UAE to expand into India.

"Being an Indian I have been trying to expand and take my business to India for



TALKS: Modi will meet several UAE Rulers and dignitaries during the visit

some time now, but I have failed twice due to the tedious process involved," Khatwani said.

"I hope Narendra Modi's visit to the UAE will now project a better branding of UAE-based Indian companies."

Others, such as 43-year-old Mubarakka Nandi, a start-up business owner, is hoping for social improvements.

"I hope Narendra Modi will make a difference in terms of visas and the treatment we get," she said.

"Why are we in the bracket of obtaining tourist visas and residence visas when we make up half the population of the UAE and a major chunk of the UAE economy is driven by Indian expats?"

Giselle Serrao, a finance professional, doesn't believe this is likely, and that the trip is purely for economic reasons.

"From India's perspective, they would like to attract investments in infrastructure development from the UAE government or UAE-based companies and further improve and/or open the UAE market for exports from India."

The exact agenda of Modi's visit is not yet clear. When pressed for details, the Indian Consulate refused to comment and directed 7DAYS to the organising committee spokesperson BR Shetty, who was not available for comment.

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This week's winner is Jennifer Delos Santos, who cashed in by getting creative with seven types of currency.

The 31-year-old from the Philippines, who is a hospital worker in Abu Dhabi, used money from a recent trip to Singapore, her home country and notes that friends had brought back from holiday to fashion her fan of cash.

Jennifer is now in the running to win our grand prize (see far right).

We also liked the image of some fancy fingerwork with a deck of cards (right).



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3. The deadline for entries is Saturday, August 15, 2015

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