Q1. How do you describe the Jordanian Indian bilateral relations?

Ans.: Our relations with Jordan are close and historic. We attach utmost importance to our friendship with Jordan. Bilateral ties between the two countries have always been cordial and warm. We have similar approaches on major global issues. The two countries have been partners in peace and progress over the last 65 years even since the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1950.

We share similar views and perceptions on regional and international issues, including on Syria, Iraq and the Middle East. We both reject religious fundamentalism and extremism as well as terrorism in all forms and manifestations. Given the commonality of security concerns of both our countries, India looks forward to further strengthening cooperation in the security field.
India is today Jordan’s fourth largest trading partner and probably the biggest investor, especially in the phosphates and textiles sector. We must work together to achieve the bilateral trade target of US$5 bn by 2025.

My current entourage includes a high level academic delegation. Leaders of Indian institutions of higher learning will sign MoUs on cooperation in the field of higher education with their respective counterparts from Jordan. These MoUs will provide a desired momentum for our academic exchanges besides providing a platform for people-to-people contacts.

In addition, there have also been continuous exchanges under the Cultural Exchange Programme (CEP). India has provided scholarships for Jordanians under the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) programme as well as through the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR).

In order to promote tourism, the Government of Jordan has liberalized its visa-regime for Indians since November 2009. India has also extended e-Tourist Visa on Arrival
[TVoA] facility to Jordan since November 2014. These schemes will further enrich people to people contacts.

I am happy that our relations have grown from strength to strength in these six and a half decades and now encompass all areas. I am confident that my visit will lead to a significant upgradation of our relations.

Q2. **The reasons for the visit to Jordan, and what does it indicate?**

Ans.: India fondly recalls the landmark State visit of Their Majesties King Abdullah II and Queen Rania in December 2006, which signaled a new era in our bilateral relations. During the visit, a number of bilateral agreements were signed to enhance multi-faceted cooperation between the two countries in the field of culture, agriculture, bilateral investment promotion and tourism.

I am visiting Jordan in response to the invitation from His Majesty King Abdullah II. This visit re-establishes high level contact between our two countries. It affords us an opportunity to review the entire gamut of our bilateral
relations and exchange views on regional and international issues of mutual interest. We will also discuss measures to strengthen trade and economic relations between the two countries.

In the backdrop of regional turmoil and unrest, my visit to Jordan will serve the purpose of sending the message that India and Jordan stand together in the fight against global terror and all forms of instability. I intend to also reiterate India’s support for Jordan in its fight against terrorism and extremism. We will sign several MoUs and Agreements which will enhance the institutional framework of cooperation between the two countries.

Q3. Does it indicate improving the relations with Jordan, more interest in the region as a whole?

Ans.: As I said earlier, our relations have always been free of any dissonance or friction. They have been moving on an upward trajectory. We share common views and concerns on array of regional issues including Middle East Peace Process and the situation in Syria and Iraq. We are united on terrorism and extremism which have become a global
menace. This visit will serve the dual purpose of improving bilateral relations and providing an opportunity to exchange views on regional and global developments.

**Q4. IT sector is well prosperous in India, can Jordan benefit from your experience in this regard?**

Ans.: I understand that Jordan has exceptionally good IT infrastructure and human resources. India is an acknowledged global player in this field. It is only natural for our two countries to harness synergies and promote cooperation in this sector.

We believe that the established strengths in the area of IT of both our countries can spur greater cooperation. Our companies must cooperate to service domestic, regional and international markets.

I am happy to note that several leading companies of Jordan are already working closely with Indian IT companies.

**Q5. Your experience with the elections and the electoral laws, how can we benefit from it, as we are**
discussing a new Jordanian electoral law that should be more representative?

Ans.: India is the largest democracy in the world. The electorate for the last Parliamentary elections held in India in May 2014 was 834.1 million voters. The total voter turnout was 66.4% or 553.8 million. Conduct of peaceful elections every five years and bringing about changes in Government through the ballot box, reflects the strength of our democratic process. Every election also serves to showcase the formidable institutional strength and experience we have built over the years in holding elections on such a large scale, across our diverse and complex nation.

We greatly appreciate the efforts in Jordan to further the democratic and political process in the country under the wise and prudent leadership of His Majesty King Abdullah. I believe the King has himself circulated several public discussion papers to further enrich the democratic traditions. There is also close collaboration between the Election Commissions of the two countries.
Jordan will need to choose its own path towards electoral reform. On our part, we would be happy to extend whatever assistance possible, if requested so by the Government of Jordan.

Q6. How does India view the increasing of extremism and violence in the Middle East, and does India see itself as far away from this matter?

Ans.: India condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. We believe terrorism should be dealt in a comprehensive manner. Segmented and partial approaches as adopted by some of the countries have been unsuccessful in countering terrorism. Dealing with global terror requires coordinated international cooperation as well as a strengthened and enforceable international legal regime.

India has adopted a comprehensive approach to deal with the challenge of terrorism. We have initiated a number of measures to prevent the spread of extremist ideology, plug financing routes, build domestically a counter narrative to radicalization, strengthen laws to prosecute
terrorists and forge a network of international partnerships for threat assessment and operational cooperation.

The reality of global expansion of terrorism, including in Syria and Iraq and globalization of the supply chain of terrorism is a matter of great concern to us. India has faced terrorism for almost four decades, largely sponsored from across our border. We are concerned about the spill over effects of instability in the region resulting in increased terrorist activities across the world, including in South Asia.

We have also sought to challenge and repudiate the terrorist narrative that global counter-terrorism efforts are directed against any particular religion or ethnic group. We are convinced that terrorism can be rolled back only through comprehensive, coordinated international cooperation combined with a strengthened, enforceable international legal regime.

**Q7. How do you evaluate Jordan’s role in the war against extremism and against ISIS? And how Jordan is dealing with this war?**
Ans: I have noted the speech made by His Majesty King Abdullah in the UN General Assembly on September 29 this year in which he has proposed seven steps to promote values of tolerance and co-existence in the face of extremism. Tolerance and co-existence are basic tenets of our civilization. We hold them very dear to our hearts. Our first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru propounded the five principles of peaceful co-existence amongst nations. I agree with His Majesty King Abdullah that the world is confronted with a third world war to which we must respond with equal intensity. I also agree that we must go back to the essence of our respective faiths and creeds. Hate speech and fear mongering should come to an end. Our values should become part of our daily life. We must amplify the voice of moderation. We should not permit religion to be used as a mask to satisfy hunger for power and control of some individuals. I completely agree that leaders of every country, every belief, every neighborhood need to take a clear and public stand against intolerance of any kind, as called for by His Majesty.
Jordan like India is a frontline State in the battle against terrorism and extremism. Jordan has India’s full support in this battle.

**Q8. The Syrian crisis, what’s the Indian stance about it?**

Ans.: India supports UN efforts to assist the national authorities in the Middle East region, including Syria, Yemen and Libya, to promote internal dialogue with a view to resolving the crises and ensuring stability and prosperity. India contributed US $ 2 million for UN humanitarian assistance in Syria in 2014 and has pledged another US $ 2 million in March 2015. India will continue to support an inclusive political dialogue that resolves the current crisis and meets the legitimate aspirations of all sections of Syrian society.

**Q9. How do you see the effects of this crisis on Jordan?**

Ans.: India is aware of the impact of the Syrian crisis on Jordan’s resources and truly commends Jordan, its
leadership and people for their compassion and untiring efforts to mitigate the sufferings of the victims of the ongoing strife in Syria. In appreciation of the Jordanian government’s efforts and in keeping with our historical and brotherly relations, the Government of India has extended bilaterally, cash assistance of US $ 500,000 to the Government of Jordan as part of the pledge made at the 3rd Pledging Conference on Syria held in Kuwait in March, 2015. Last year, India also paid US $ 500,000 to the Jordan Response Fund.

**Q10. India’s stance from the Palestinian Israeli conflict, which remains unsolved for decades?**

Ans.: In line with our longstanding support to the Palestinian cause, India will continue to support initiatives at the UN for an early realization of a sovereign, independent, viable and united State of Palestine within secured and recognized borders, side by side and at peace with Israel, with East Jerusalem as its capital, as endorsed in the Arab Peace Initiative, Quartet Roadmap and relevant UN resolutions.