

ECONOMY

Indo-Israel FTA likely to be concluded this year

Bilateral trade of \$5 b expected to rise 60% in next two years

Our Bureau

Hyderabad March 19

An Indo-Israel Free Trade Agreement is expected to be concluded this year, paving the way for further expansion in bilateral trade between the two countries. Mr Muneer Akbaria, Consul-General, Consulate General of Israel, said discussions between the two countries on the FTA were at an advanced level.

"At present bilateral trade between India and Israel is \$5 billion. We expect to increase it by 60 per cent in the next two years," he told media-persons here on Monday.

The new areas identified for engagement included water technology, agriculture, pharmaceuticals and life sciences.

DESALINATION TECH

He said Israel, which had developed new desalination technologies, could help India in increasing water supply through desalination. "We have five desalination plants in Israel, supplying drinking water to the extent of 50-60 per cent of our re-



Mr Yonatan ben Zaken, Head, Israel Investment Authority, at a media briefing on India-Israel trade in Hyderabad on Monday. Next to him is Mr. V. S. Raju, president, Federation of Andhra Pradesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry, and at left is Mr Muneer Akbaria, Consul-General of Israel. — P. V. Sivakumar

quirement. The target is to cover 100 per cent of our drinking water requirement through desalination by 2020," Mr Akbaria said.

A new desalination technology developed by Israel

involves a cost of 50 cents per cubic metre of desalinated water. Also, the country uses 80 per cent of its sewage water for agriculture after elaborating treatment.

Stating that Andhra Pra-

desh had been a focus area for Israel, he said Israel and the State Government were working towards concluding an agreement for joint research and development on the industrial front.

Israel is also keen on having joint training programmes for the security personnel of the two countries, which faced almost similar security concerns.

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