

Indian state explores strategic cooperation with Saudi Arabia

Kingdom keen on attracting Rajasthani talent in technology, healthcare

Sarjany Kumar Jaipur

The Indian state of Rajasthan is preparing for new collaborations with Saudi Arabia, its industry and commerce minister said, following meetings with the Kingdom's delegation to the region's first international investment summit in Jaipur.

India's largest state by area hosted the first Rising Rajasthan Global Investment Summit this week to draw foreign cooperation, as it seeks to double its gross domestic product to \$350 billion in the next five years.

Representatives from over

20 countries, including Saudi Arabia, the UAE, the UK, Australia, Japan and Russia, were present during the three-day event that concluded on Wednesday.

The Saudi Ministry of Investment, which set up an Invest Saudi pavilion at the forum, brought 16 delegates for prospective cooperation talks with Indian businesses.

"It was the biggest delegation. I must thank the Saudi Arabian government for this initiative," Rajasthan Industry Minister Rajyavardhan Rathore told Arab News after a meeting with Saudi delegates on Tuesday evening.

"I see the partnership between the two nations growing stronger. As it is very strong

politically, I think even in terms of business, we can move much closer ... We had a wonderful interaction. They have already begun to show their interest in mining."

Rajasthan, with its expansive desert landscapes hosting numerous photovoltaic plants, leads India in solar energy production. The state is also the top producer of marble, home to the country's largest lead mines, and holds rich deposits of copper and rare-earth elements.

"It's one of the best places to invest in India ... There are multiple sectors that Saudi companies could be interested in," Rathore said.

"We have a lot of land, we have a lot of sun, and we have

multiple sectors, including minerals, mining, renewable energy, petrochemical, logistics, infrastructure, education, agrobased products — innumerable (sectors)."

Cooperation in the hospitality industry was also on the table. Rajasthan has nine sites on the UNESCO World Heritage list, including Jaipur city, six forts built between the fifth and 18th centuries, and Keoladeo National Park, which hosts thousands of native, resident and migratory birds.

"We have discussed if multiple hotels can be set up because tourism is quite big," Rathore said. "We also discussed the possibility of a Saudi company investing in a luxury train."