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Press Release

on

**Round Table Discussion with H.E. Dr. Ali Ardashir Larijani
Chairman of the Majlis-e Shura-e Islami (Parliament) of the
Islamic Republic of Iran**

26 February, 2013

ICWA, New Delhi

A Round Table Discussion was held with H.E. Dr. Ali Ardashir Larijani, Chairman of the *Majlis-e Shura-e Islami* (Parliament) of the Islamic Republic of Iran, at the Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA), New Delhi, on February 26, 2013. Ambassador K.C. Singh, a former Indian envoy to Iran, chaired the Round Table. The attendees included a large Iranian delegation which, inter alia, consisted of Mr. Hassan Ghashghavi, Deputy Minister for Consular and Parliamentary Affairs of the Foreign Affairs Ministry of Iran, several members of Parliament of Iran, and Ambassador Gholam Reza Ansari, Iran's Ambassador to India. Several members of the Indian strategic community, academics and former Indian ambassadors were also present.

Welcoming Dr. Larijani and his delegation,

Ambassador Rajiv K. Bhatia, Director General, ICWA, spoke about the wide-ranging friendly ties between India and Iran. He stated that the bilateral relationship was imbued with a historical context as well as contemporary relevance. Noting that the audience was keenly



Amb. Rajiv K. Bhatia, DG, ICWA welcoming Dr. Larijani to the ICWA.



Amb. Rajiv K. Bhatia, DG, ICWA speaking at the Round Table

interested in listening to Dr. Larijani's views, he invited the speaker to take the floor.

In his exposition, Dr. Larijani dwelt at length on the prevalent world order and global power politics. He held that the emerging multi-polar was still at a nascent stage and would take time to shape up. The countries that aspired to be key players in this era should be endowed with three characteristics: independence, democracy and regionalism. He emphasised the role of regionalism in resolving conflicts, and promoting cooperation among countries. He expressed strong views against external interventions. In the new global architecture, the military might would not play a decisive role, unlike in the past. Economy and new technologies would hold sway.

Speaking on Iran-India relations, he recalled the "close historical bonds", spanning 7-8 centuries, before the advent of the British rule. He suggested that the two nations could have a complementary engagement, fulfilling each others requirements. He mentioned the areas of energy, pipelines, setting up of refineries, sharing of petrochemical technology, transit routes, and joint ventures in Central Asia, the Middle East, and Afghanistan for bilateral economic engagement. He, however, cautioned that the powerful nations, which were opposed to a multi-polar world, were inimical to such regional cooperation among nations.



Dr. Larijani, speaking at the Round Table

Dr. Larijani underlined that Iran's nuclear programme was peaceful and transparent. Iran did not want a nuclear bomb, which it had publicly characterised as 'Haraam'. Commenting on the economic sanctions on Iran, imposed by the Western countries, he questioned whether such sanctions were justified under their avowedly liberal philosophy.

The Chair, Ambassador K.C. Singh, remarked that at the time when P-5+1 process with Iran was about to kick off, the discussion on such issues was pertinent. He said that while the US perceived its sanctions on Iran as effective, Iran thought otherwise and viewed the US as a power on retreat.



The Chair, Amb. K. C. Singh, at the Round Table

Ambassador Singh observed that in his opinion, the US had demonstrated immense capacity in the past to reinvent itself. Its shale gas breakthrough held promise.

The Q&A session centred around Iran's nuclear programme, Syria and India-Iran bilateral relations. Dr. Larijani observed that albeit the outside powers generally ensured that important regional countries were kept occupied with conflicts and other pressing issues, Iran and India could go ahead to build a relationship of long term cooperation. He lamented that the players who created terrorists in the aftermath of Russia' entry into Afghanistan, were rolling out the same game plan in Syria.

Dr. Larijani concluded with the hope that India would play a bigger role internationally. Ambassador Rajiv Bhatia thanked the Iranian delegation and commented that the Round Table marked a beginning of Track-1.5 Dialogue between the two countries.
