

# **INDIA SPEAKS**

(Monthly Digest of Official Indian Statements on Middle East)

No. 69

April 2015

## **BILATERAL ISSUES**

### **a. BAHRAIN**

#### **1. Alok Kumar Sinha appointed as the next Ambassador of India to the Kingdom of Bahrain, New Delhi, 16 March 2015**

Alok Kumar Sinha, (IFS: 1986), currently Joint Secretary in the Ministry, has been appointed as the next Ambassador of India to the Kingdom of Bahrain. He is expected to take up his assignment shortly.

*Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, [http://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/24950/Alok\\_Kumar\\_Sinha\\_appointed\\_as\\_the\\_next\\_Ambassador\\_of\\_India\\_to\\_the\\_Kingdom\\_of\\_Bahrain](http://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/24950/Alok_Kumar_Sinha_appointed_as_the_next_Ambassador_of_India_to_the_Kingdom_of_Bahrain)*

### **b. EGYPT**

#### **2. Visit of Minister for Environment and Forests, Prakash Javadekar to Egypt, Cairo, 3 March 2015**

The Cabinet Minister for Environment, Forests & Climate Change Prakash Javadekar will visit Egypt on 4-6 March 2015 to attend the 15th Session of the African Ministerial Conference on Environment. India, along with China and France are special invitees to the Conference. Javadekar will speak at the opening session of the Conference, where he will outline India's position on climate change, particularly in the context of the upcoming 21<sup>st</sup> Conference of Parties (COP) of the UNFCCC in Paris in December 2015.

During his two day visit, he will hold meetings with his Egyptian counterpart, Khaled Fahmy, to discuss bilateral cooperation in the field of environment and the coordination of India's position with Egypt at the UNFCCC talks. He will also call upon the Minister for Foreign Affairs Sameh Shoukry. He will also meet members of the Indian Community in a special function.

India has consistently maintained its position on climate change, in line with the universally accepted principle of common but differentiated responsibility. Despite the developmental challenges that India faces, India is undertaking ambitious climate actions including lowering of the emissions intensity of our economic growth, increasing energy efficiency across sectors and making greater use of renewable energy. On 28 February, the Finance Minister announced a roadmap for renewable energy in the Annual Budget. A 175,000 MW target was set for clean energy installations by 2022. This would comprise 100,000 MW of solar power, 60,000 MW of wind power, 10,000 MW of energy from biomass and 5,000 MW from small hydroelectric projects. Currently, India's clean energy capacity is 33,000 MW.

The Minister will address members of the media at a Press Conference on 5 March 2015, at 4 PM, at the premises of the Information Wing (2nd Floor, Abu El Fida Building, 3 Abu El Fida, Zamalek). For more information, please contact the Embassy at [info.cairo@mea.gov.in](mailto:info.cairo@mea.gov.in) or follow us on Facebook (Indian Embassy Cairo) or twitter (@indembcairo).

*Source: Embassy of India, Cairo, [http://www.indembcairo.com/en-us/presscentre/pressreleases.aspx?udt\\_656\\_param\\_detail=43264](http://www.indembcairo.com/en-us/presscentre/pressreleases.aspx?udt_656_param_detail=43264)*

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### **3. India Day Celebrations in Mansoura, Cairo, 04 March 2015**

The Maulana Azad Centre for Indian Culture (MACIC), Embassy of India, organized 'India Days' celebrations at Mansoura, Dakahlia Governorate on 2-3 March 2015. The event was held with the cooperation of the Dakahlia Governorate, Cultural Palace at Mansoura, Dakahlia Chamber of Commerce and University of Mansoura.

The Ambassador met with the Governor of Dakahlia, Hossam El Din Eman as well as the Vice President of the Mansoura Chamber of Commerce to discuss the opportunities for expanding economic cooperation between India and Egypt. The Chamber of Commerce expressed their interest in attracting Indian investments, particularly in the field of oil refinery and garbage recycling. Special emphasis was on cooperation in the IT sector. While interacting with the business community of Mansoura, Ambassador Suri said that "India is ready for partnership and to share technologies and expertise in the areas mutual interest to both the countries."

Prior to formal engagements on 3 March, MACIC had organized Glimpses of India Painting competition at Cultural Palace where more than 600 students participated. The winners of the painting competition were awarded medals and certificates by Ambassador Suri and Hossam El Din Eman, Governor of Dakahlia. An exhibition of Incredible India posters was organized to promote Indian tourism. Lauding the vibrant economic and political relationship between India and Egypt, Ambassador Suri said the programme in Mansoura was part of the outreach activities of the Embassy to connect with Egyptians outside Cairo. Ambassador Suri was highly appreciative of the entries in the painting competition. A cultural performance of Egyptian traditional music was also held at the cultural function.

As part of the celebrations, a Photo Exhibition on India-Egypt relations tracing the ties between the two countries over a century as well as Indian investments in Egypt was inaugurated by Ambassador and Prof. Magda Nasr, Vice President of the University of Mansoura. Ambassador made a presentation in which he reviewed the progress achieved by India especially in the economic and scientific fields and also lauded the vibrant economic, political and cultural relations between India and Egypt.

Ambassador also visited M/s. Mansoura for Resins and Chemicals Industries, an Indian company which has invested in the region.

The company is producing Formalin, Urea Formaldehyde, Glue, Phenol Moulding Powder and Foundry Resins which are used in hospitals, sugar industries, poultry farms, fertilizers and furniture making. The company has been accredited with ISO 9001 for Quality Management, ISO 14001 for Environmental Management, and ISO 18001 for Health & Safety Systems. Fifty per cent of its products are exported to Germany, Belgium, Spain, Oman, UAE, Nigeria, Kenya, Libya and other countries. M/s. Mansoura for Resins & Chemical employs 400 Egyptians. Ambassador Suri was appreciative of the investment made by the Indian company and noted that this is an example of the Indian company contributing to the Egyptian economy.

For more information, please contact the Embassy of India, Cairo at [info.cairo@mea.gov.in](mailto:info.cairo@mea.gov.in) or [ormaciac@indembcairo.com](mailto:ormaciac@indembcairo.com) or follow us on Facebook or Twitter (@indembcairo)

*Source: Embassy of India, Cairo, [http://www.indembcairo.com/en-us/presscentre/pressreleases.aspx?udt\\_656\\_param\\_detail=43266](http://www.indembcairo.com/en-us/presscentre/pressreleases.aspx?udt_656_param_detail=43266)*

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#### **4. India to participate in the Egypt Economic Development Conference, Cairo, 8 March 2015**

India will be represented at the Egypt Economic Development Conference (EEDC) in Sharm El Sheikh on 13-15 March 2014, by a large delegation led by Ambassador Navdeep Suri, the Indian Ambassador in Egypt. The delegation of 43 persons will comprise of representatives from 25 Indian companies in addition to a delegation from the Confederation of Indian Industry, one of the principal chambers of commerce and industry in India. The representation will cut across sectors and will include the petro-chemicals giant TCI Sanmar, the Egyptian Indian Polyester Company (EIPET), Tata Sons, Kirloskar Brothers Ltd, Ranbaxy Pharmaceuticals, Galaxy Chemicals, Essel Propack and Olam International, among others. The companies include those that already have a presence in Egypt as well as those looking for investment opportunities such as Maruti Suzuki, Godrej consumer products, Aptech, and Shapoorji and Pallonji etc. Indian companies are keenly interested in exploring opportunities in renewable energy, Information Technology, Engineering, Automobiles, Irrigation, and Petrochemicals etc.

Expressing his commitment to strengthening relations with Egypt, the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi congratulated President Sisi in organizing the conference in a message to him on 7 February. He said "India attaches high importance to relations with Egypt. Our two countries

enjoy close and friendly relations, which have been further bolstered by our growing trade and investment ties in recent years. I am sure that the Conference will attract participation from a large number of Indian companies, which will lay the foundation for further enhancement in our bilateral economic relations.”

India and Egypt have a strong economic relationship that has grown despite the global economic downturn. Between 2008-13, bilateral trade grew by 30 percent and now stands at close to US\$ 5 billion. India is Egypt’s sixth largest trading partner overall, the 2nd largest export destination for Egypt and the 11th largest source of imports. Principal export items from India to Egypt include mineral fuels, automobile parts, meat and meat products, electrical and machinery products, and cotton while India imports crude oil, rock phosphate, cotton, chemicals and oil seed.

For more information, please contact the Embassy of India, Cairo at [info.cairo@mea.gov.in](mailto:info.cairo@mea.gov.in) or follow us on Facebook (India in Egypt) or Twitter (@indembcairo).

*Source: Embassy of India, Cairo, [http://www.indembcairo.com/en-us/presscentre/pressreleases.aspx?udt\\_656\\_param\\_detail=43274](http://www.indembcairo.com/en-us/presscentre/pressreleases.aspx?udt_656_param_detail=43274)*

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#### **5. India: Snapshot of Odisha, Cairo, 09 Mar 2015**

The Maulana Azad Centre for Indian Culture (MACIC), Embassy of India, will be hosting an exhibition of photographs and paintings titled ‘India: Snapshot of Odisha’ by Dr. Hassnaa Hassan, Assistant Professor of Photographic Art, University of Alexandria, on 12 March 2015 at 5.30 pm. at its premises. The photographic exhibition will be inaugurated by Navdeep Suri, Ambassador of India.

Dr. Hassnaa Hassan had attended the Art Residency in Bhubaneswar and Puri in the State of Odisha, India, in December 2014 which was organized by Kalanirvana International Art Centre and hosted by KIIT University. Dr. Hassan was deeply impressed with the idea of her research behind the visual. The exhibition will provide a glimpse of Odisha, an Indian State (Governorate) located on the eastern coast of India that provides combination of beautiful locations, exotic cultures and classical dance. The State of Odisha has a 480 kilometre long coastline, mountains, serene lakes and frolicking rivers.

The exhibition will be at display at MACIC from 12-18 March from 9.30 am to 3.00 pm.

For more information, please contact the Embassy of India, Cairo at [info.cairo@mea.gov.in](mailto:info.cairo@mea.gov.in) or [ormacic@indembcairo.com](mailto:ormacic@indembcairo.com) or follow us on Facebook or Twitter (@indembcairo)

*Source: Embassy of India, Cairo, [http://www.indembcairo.com/en-us/presscentre/pressreleases.aspx?udt\\_656\\_param\\_detail=43273](http://www.indembcairo.com/en-us/presscentre/pressreleases.aspx?udt_656_param_detail=43273)*

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#### **6. Third Edition of India by the Nile in Cairo, Cairo, 22 March 2015**

The Embassy of India, Cairo (through the Maulana Azad Centre for Indian Culture) in partnership with the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Tourism, and the Cairo Opera House and managed by Teamworks Arts, announces the return of the third edition of India by the Nile

in April 2015. For the last two years, the festival has been billed as the biggest foreign festival in Egypt since the 25 January Revolution. This year the festival, running from 30 March -17 April, will be inaugurated by the none other than the much loved Bollywood superstar Amitabh Bachchan. Bachchan will speak about his films, particularly *Amar Akbar Anthony* at the Opera House on 31 March.

The inauguration of the festival will be followed up by a new musical, Bollywood Extravaganza – A Tale of Passion, Love and Revenge, which will run at the Opera House from the 1-3 April, and will see more than 35 Indian dancers performing to the much-loved music of Indian cinema. The musical will also travel to Alexandria. A Bollywood dance workshop will also be organized on 30 March at Medan Theatre in the Cairo Opera House complex.

Through the three weeks of the festival, the range and variety of India's diverse cultural ethos will be on display. A dance group from the North-Eastern state of Manipur will showcase the folk traditions of the area. The well-known band Advaita, will perform fusion music combining the classical musical traditions of India music with Western rock, at Cairo, Alexandria, Port Said, and Ismailia. In a fresh take on a traditional field, this year Indian cuisine will feature street food, available at event venues through the festival.

Two events of special focus this year will be a Wellbeing Weekend at Al Azhar Park and a Handicrafts Exhibition and Symposium at Fustat and Hanager. The first will focus on the power of yoga, meditation and India's holistic medical traditions, and will have master yoga instructors teach Yoga and meditation to yoga schools and enthusiasts. The second will draw together artisans and experts from India and Egypt in a unique collaborative programme on Handicrafts. The effort will not only be to showcase the diversity and beauty of Indian handicrafts, but to share experiences in the field of marketing – something that had made the sector in India into a multi-billion export success story. In Words on Water, Indian and Egypt literary and cultural figures will speak about 'Preserving Cultures' at the Supreme Council of Culture.

For more details contact the Indian Embassy at [info.cairo@mea.gov.in](mailto:info.cairo@mea.gov.in), or follow us on Facebook (Indian Embassy Cairo) or twitter (@indembcairo), or visit [www.indiabythenile.com](http://www.indiabythenile.com)

*Source: Embassy of India, Cairo, [http://www.indembcairo.com/en-us/presscentre/pressreleases.aspx?udt\\_656\\_param\\_detail=43279](http://www.indembcairo.com/en-us/presscentre/pressreleases.aspx?udt_656_param_detail=43279)*

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### **c. IRAN**

#### **7. Passports of Indians retained in Iraq, New Delhi, 4 March 2015**

Will the Minister of Overseas Indian Affairs be pleased to state:-

- (a) Whether the passports of Indian workers retained by employers in Iraq as reported by Amnesty International have since been handed over to them?
- (b) If so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefore?
- (c) The steps taken by the Government to intervene in the matter to resolve this issue?

Answer

Minister of State for Overseas Indian Affairs Gen. Dr. V. K. Singh (Retd.)

(a) (b)& (c): Indian Embassy, Baghdad has reported that during the evacuation process last year, certain media reports have come to the notice of the Mission that Amnesty International has issued certain statements regarding a few Indian nationals not being allowed to leave by their employers by retaining their passports. All those cases were examined and have since been resolved and Indian nationals have been repatriated.

*Source: Lok Sabha (Council of People), Unstarred Question No. 1524, asked by P.C. Mohan, <http://164.100.47.132/LssNew/psearch/QResult16.aspx?qref=14147>*

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### **8. Setting up of Fertilizer Plant in Iran, New Delhi, 10 March 2015**

The Government has revived its plan to set up a fertilizer plants in Iran. The proposal is to set up a Urea/Ammonia JV Project in Iran with capacity to produce 1.3 MT Urea for import to India. Rashtriya Chemicals & Fertilizers Ltd., Gujarat Narmada Valley Fertilizers & Chemicals Ltd., and Gujarat State Fertilizers & Chemicals Ltd., have been identified as Indian Companies in the JV.

The Indian companies have appointed SBI Capital to identify the Iranian Partners for the Joint Venture Project. The issue has been taken up with the Iranian Government to accord importance to the project at par with their domestic projects.

This information was given by Hansraj Gangaram Ahir, Minister of State of the Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers in the Lok Sabha today.

*Source: Press Information Bureau of India, New Delhi, <http://www.pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx>*

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### **9. Third Country Export to Iran, New Delhi, 20 March 2015**

Government of India has issued guidelines in allowing third country exports of humanitarian goods (food, medicines and medical equipment) to Iran as a part of oil payments due to that country.

Ministry of Finance has decided that payments to the extent of US\$ 100 million per month for such third country exports to Iran would be allowed from the 45 percent INR vostro account held with the UCO Bank. Payment over and above US\$ 100 million per month would be met from 55 percent EUR component.

The balance in the INR Vostro Account of Iranian Commercial Banks with UCO Bank as on 16 March 2015 is INR 17,895.50 Crore. As on 28 February 2015, US\$ 5,943 million is in EUR component.

This information was given by the Minister of State (Independent Charge) in the Ministry of Commerce and Industry Nirmala Sitharaman in a written reply in Lok Sabha today.

*Source: Press Information Bureau of India, New Delhi, <http://www.pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx>*

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### **10. Third Country Export to Iran, New Delhi, 20 March 2015**

Will the Minister of Commerce and Industry be pleased to state:-

- (a) Whether the Government has offered to permit third country export of food material, medicines and medical equipments to Iran to slash India`s huge oil import bill?
- (b) If so, the details thereof;
- (c) Whether the Government has asked the Ministry of Finance to clarify such provision?
- (d) If so, the details thereof along with the response of Ministry of Finance thereto?
- (e) The outstanding balance for import of oil from Iran?

**Answer:**

The Minister of State in the Ministry of Commerce and Industry (Nirmala Sitharaman)

(a) and (b): Government of India has issued guidelines to allow third country exports of humanitarian goods food, medicines and medical equipment) to Iran as a part of oil payments due to that country.

(c) and (d): Ministry of Finance has decided that payments to the extent of US\$ 100 million per month for such third country exports to Iran would be allowed from the 45 percent INR vostro account held with the UCO Bank. Payment over and above US\$ 100 million per month would be met from 55 percent EUR component.

*Source: Lok Sabha (Council of People), Unstarred Question No. 3999, asked by Gaurav Gogai, Jyotiraditya Madhavrao Scindia, Sumedhanad Saraswati,*  
<http://164.100.47.132/LssNew/psearch/QResult16.aspx?qref=15460>

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**11. President of India's message on the eve of Nouroz Day of Iran, New Delhi, 20 March 2015**

The President of India, Pranab Mukherjee has extended his greetings and felicitations to the Government and people of the Islamic Republic of Iran on the eve of the Nouroz day of the Islamic Republic of Iran (21 March 2015).

In his message to His Excellency Dr. Hassan Rouhani, the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the President has said, "On the joyous occasion of Nouroz, I am delighted to convey my warm greetings and best wishes to Your Excellency and to the people of Iran.

The close bilateral relations between India and Iran reflect the people-to-people links and historical-civilization bonds between our two countries over centuries. We attach great importance to this relationship which is multi-faceted and mutually beneficial.

Please accept, Excellency, our best wishes for your good health and well being as well as for the progress and prosperity for the people of Iran".

*Source: Press Information Bureau of India, New Delhi,*  
<http://www.pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx>

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**d. ISRAEL**

**12. Foreign Investment in defence sector, New Delhi, 10 March 2015**

Will the Minister of Defence be pleased to state:-

- (a) Whether foreign investment has been made / promised in the defence sector after August, 2014?
- (b) If so, the details thereof along with total amount of money to be invested?
- (c) Whether Government has made specific agreement with Israel in respect of defence deals?
- (d) If so, the details thereof?

**Answer:**

Minister of State in the Ministry of Defence (Rao Inderjit Singh)

(a) and (b): FDI proposals received from Foreign Investment Promotion Board (FIPB) after August 2014 are as per Annexure-I.

(c) Ministry of Defence has neither entered into nor is there any proposal at present to enter into any framework agreement with Israel for supply of arms, military equipment and / or technology transfers in the defence sector.

(d) Does not arise.

*Source: Lok Sabha (Council of People), Unstarred Question No. 1332, asked by Nadimul Haque, <http://164.100.47.5/qsearch/QResult.aspx>*

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**13. Acquisition of Missiles From Israel, New Delhi, 13 March 2015**

Will the Minister of Defence be pleased to state:-

- (a) Whether the Government has approved acquisition of Barak-I Israeli missile?
- (b) If so, the details thereof and the financial allocation made for the purpose?
- (c) Whether the armament firm Israeli Aero Space Industries and Rafael are blacklisted from doing business with the Government of India?
- (d) If so, the details thereof?

**Answer**

Minister of Defence (Manohar Parrikar)

(a) and (b): Yes, Madam. The contract for procurement of Barak-1 Missiles for Indian Navy was signed in October 2014 with M/s Rafael Advanced Defence Systems Ltd., Israel at a cost of Rs.875.49 Crores.

(c) and (d): The Ministry has not issued any instructions blacklisting M/s IAI and M/s Rafael from doing business with Government of India. However, vigilance instructions on procurement proposals involving M/s IAI and M/s Rafael were issued in 2011.

*Source: Lok Sabha (Council of People), Unstarred Question No. 2819, asked by Pralhad Venkatesh, <http://164.100.47.132/LssNew/psearch/QResult16.aspx?qref=13180>*

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**14. Indo -Israel Co- Operation in Defence Sector, New Delhi, 20 March 2015**

Will the Minister of Defence be pleased to state:-

- (a) Whether the Government of Israel has offered to share technologies and experiences and co-operation in joint defence research and development and manufacturing with India?



- (b) If so, the details thereof.
- (c) Whether the Government has held any discussion with the Government of Israel in this regard?
- (d) If so, the details thereof along with the consensus reached between the two countries in developing indigenous defence production?
- (e) The details of the proposed projects and the expected financial investment likely to be made for the purpose?

**Answer**

Minister of State In The Ministry Of Defence (Rao Inderjit Singh)

(a) and (b): Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO) has several defence R&D programmes with the Directorate of Defence Research and Development (DDR&D) (MAFAT), Israel Ministry of Defence. Under the joint programme, Israel shares technology information, know-how, know-why, joint R&D, collaborative research projects.

(c) to (e): For Defence R&D technology cooperation, DRDO and DDR&D, Israel Ministry of Defence meets annually under the aegis of Indo-Israel Management Council (IIMC) to pursue and discuss defence R&D activities. Defence procurements from various countries are carried out by following transparent procedures laid down in Defence Procurement Procedure (DPP) and Defence Procurement Manual (DPM).

*Source: Lok Sabha (Council of People), Unstarred Question No. 3994, asked by Dharmendra Yadav, Shivaji Patil Adhalrao and Anandrao Adsul, <http://164.100.47.132/LssNew/psearch/QResult16.aspx?qref=14096>*

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**e. KUWAIT**

**15. Beware of Touts, Kuwait, 3 March 2015**

The Embassy regrets to inform that some Indian touts hang around its premises trying to cheat and mislead our nationals. All Indian nationals are advised to ignore these touts who are often seen hanging in the vicinity of Embassy premises. For any assistance/query w.r.t. passport, visa, attestation services, please contact the Embassy Officer on duty in the meeting room on all working days from 1000-1100 hrs and 1430-1530 hrs.

*Source: Embassy of India, Kuwait, <http://www.indembkwt.org/DispNews.aspx?ID=749>*

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**16. Minimum wages for Indian labourers, Kuwait, 3 March 2015**

At present the minimum wages for Indian labourers (both technical and non technical/farm workers) working in Private Sector (Visa No. 18) range from KD 70 to KD 80 per month.

After analyzing the labour market situation in the region, it has been decided to revise the Minimum Referral Wage to KD 100 per month for labourers/farm workers (including similar categories) with immediate effect.

The aforementioned minimum wage will continue to remain exclusive of accommodation, food and other amenities stipulated in the Kuwaiti laws and regulations. The revision of wages of other categories of workers in Private Sector will be announced later.

*Source: Embassy of India, Kuwait, <http://www.indembkwt.org/DispNews.aspx?ID=750>*

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### **17. Indian Food, Herbal and Handicrafts Exhibition held, Kuwait, 18 Kuwait 2015**

The Embassy of India, Kuwait in association with the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce & Industry (KCCI) organized an “Indian Food, Herbal and Handicrafts Exhibition” at the KCCI’s Exhibition Hall on Wednesday, 18 March 2015 from 11.00 a.m. to 8.00 p.m., where a variety of Indian food products including Ready-to-Eat food, Indian snacks, spices, Indian tea, cosmetics as well as clothes, Handicrafts and Herbal products were displayed. Many importers and distributors of these products as well as Indian restaurants in Kuwait participated in the Exhibition. The display materials provided by the Tea Board of India, Dubai and India Tourism Office, Dubai were also displayed during the Exhibition. The Exhibition was jointly inaugurated by Sunil Jain, Ambassador of India to Kuwait along with Abdulwahab Al-Wazzan, Second Vice President, KCCI.

Many Kuwaitis, foreign nationals and Indians visited the Exhibition and were impressed by the display of a large number of Indian products available in Kuwait, especially Herbal medicines. India Tourism brochures were also distributed to the visitors. Some photographs taken on the occasion are also attached.

*Source: Embassy of India, Kuwait, <http://www.indembkwt.org/DispNews.aspx?ID=756>*

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### **18. Proposed recruitment of Indian nurses for work in Kuwait, Kuwait, 19 March 2015**

The Government of India has issued instructions on 12 March 2015 that with effect from 30 April 2015, the recruitment of Indian nurses for employment in Kuwait will be restricted through State-run recruiting agencies, viz., NORKA (Non-Resident Keralites’ Affairs Department)-ROOTS and ODEPC (Overseas Development and Employment Promotion Consultants Ltd), Kerala. Furthermore, from the date above, the emigration of Indian nurses for overseas employment in all 18 ECR countries, including Kuwait, will require emigration clearance from Protector of Emigrants Offices in India.

It has also been decided that foreign employers who seek to recruit Indian nurses will register from 30 April 2015 onwards in the e-Migrate system (being introduced by the Embassy) for vetting by the Embassy. Thereafter, foreign employers can raise demand for Indian nurses on e-Migrate system with the terms and conditions of their employment. On scrutiny of documents, the attestation/approval would be done by the Indian Embassy on-line basis.

The proposed recruitment of Indian nurses for work in Kuwait through State-run manpower agencies in India, viz., NORKA-ROOTS and ODEPC will help in establishing a fair and transparent mechanism for recruitment of Indian nurses for work in Kuwait.

*Source: Embassy of India, Kuwait, <http://www.indembkwt.org/DispNews.aspx?ID=759>*

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**19. Revision of fees related to Indian Passport services, Kuwait, 3 March 2015**

There will be a minor revision of fees related to Indian Passport services w.e.f. 01.04.2015, enumerated below:-

S. No.	Name of the Passport Service	Present Fees KD	Fees effective from 1.4.2015 KD
1	New Passport for 10 years	22.500	23.000
2	New Passport for Minors below 18 years	15.000	15.500
3	New Passport in lieu of Damage/Lost Passport	45.000	46.000
4	Birth Certificate/Police Clearance Certificate	7.500	8.000

Detail chart of fees applicable for various Passport services effective from 01.04.2015 is available on the Embassy's website.

*Source: Embassy of India, Kuwait, <http://www.indembkwt.org/DispNews.aspx?ID=761>*

**f. OMAN****20. Important announcement about shifting BLS premise, Muscat, 16 March 2015**

All Indian nationals living in the Sultanate of Oman as well as Omani citizens and expatriate community staying in Oman are hereby informed that M/s BLS International, to whom Embassy of India, Muscat has outsourced passports, visa and passport related miscellaneous services, is shifting their current premises (situated at Al Makhtabi Building, Wattayah) to a new location with effect from 22 March 2015.

The address of the new location of M/s BLS International and new phone/fax numbers are as under

4th Floor (C Block), Al Tamimah Building (Polyglot Institute)

Way No 327, Building No 1340 Wattayah, Muscat

Phone: 24568970, 24568971

Fax: 24568972

Website: [www.blsindia-oman.com](http://www.blsindia-oman.com)

Due to shifting to new premises, M/s BLS International will remain closed on 21 March 2015 (Saturday).

*Source: Embassy of India, Muscat, <http://www.indemb-oman.org/inner.aspx?type=AllPressRelease&id=0>*

**g. PALESTINE****21. Ending Support to Palestine**

Will the Minister of External Affairs be pleased to state:-

- Whether India intends to end support to Palestine at the United Nations?
- If so, the details thereof along with the reasons for such a move?

**Answer**

The Minister of State in the Ministry of External Affairs Gen. Dr. V. K. Singh (Retd)

(a) No.

*Source: Lok Sabha (Council of People), Unstarred Question No. 1561, asked by K. Maragatham, <http://164.100.47.132/LssNew/psearch/OResult16.aspx?gref=13434>*

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**h. QATAR**

**22. State Visit of Emir of the State of Qatar to India (24-25 March 2015), New Delhi, 20 March 2015**

At the invitation of Hon'ble President, Pranab Mukherjee, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, Emir of the State of Qatar is paying a state visit to India from 24-25 March 2015. He will be accompanied by a high-level delegation, including ministers, senior officials and captains of industry.

This is the first visit of the Emir of Qatar to India. There have been regular high-level bilateral visits, including the then Emir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani to India in 1999, 2005 and 2012. Former Prime Minister, Hon'ble Dr Manmohan Singh visited Qatar in November 2008.

During the forthcoming visit, the Emir of Qatar will call on Hon'ble President and meet Hon'ble Vice-President of India. He will hold bilateral talks with Hon'ble Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

India and Qatar have historically enjoyed close and friendly relations anchored on mutually beneficial commercial exchanges and extensive people to people contacts. Qatar is an important trading partner for us in the Gulf region with bilateral trade in 2013-14 touching US\$ 16.72 billion. It is our largest supplier of LNG requirements, accounting for 87 percent of our total imports in 2013-14.

Indians form the largest expatriate community in Qatar and their positive contribution in the progress and development of their host country is well recognized and appreciated. There are over 600,000 Indian nationals working in Qatar.

*Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, [http://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/24995/State\\_Visit\\_of\\_Emire\\_of\\_the\\_State\\_of\\_Qatar\\_to\\_India\\_2425\\_March\\_2015](http://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/24995/State_Visit_of_Emire_of_the_State_of_Qatar_to_India_2425_March_2015)*

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**23. List of Agreements/MoUs exchanged by External Affairs Minister and her Qatari counterpart Dr. Khalid Bin Mohammed Al Attiyah during the visit of Emir of Qatar to India, New Delhi, 25 March 2015**

List of Agreements /MoUs exchanged by External Affairs Minister and her Qatari counterpart Dr. Khalid Bin Mohammed Al Attiyah during the visit of Emir of Qatar to India

S. No.	Agreement/MoU	Remarks
1.	Agreement on Transfer of Sentenced Persons	Under this agreement, Indian prisoners convicted in Qatar can be brought to India to serve the remaining part of their sentence. Similarly Qatari Citizens convicted in India can be sent to his home country to serve their sentence. This agreement would enable the sentenced persons to be near their families and would help in the process of their social rehabilitation.
2.	MoU for Cooperation in the field of Information and Communication Technology	This MoU would provide enhanced business opportunities for Indian IT industry in Qatar. Qatar has embarked on an ambitious programme for overall development as part of their Qatar 2030 vision and has created a dedicated Ministry of Information and Communication Technology for capacity building in ICT.
3.	MoU between Ministry of Earth sciences and Qatar Meteorological Department for Scientific and Technical cooperation	Qatar Meteorological Department under the Civil Aviation Authority, Qatar had expressed their desire for cooperation with Indian Meteorological Department in the field of Atmospheric and Ocean Sciences. The scientific collaboration between India and Qatar will be beneficial to improve atmospheric & Oceanic capacity in both the countries.
4.	MoU between Diplomatic Institute of MOFA, Qatar and Foreign Service Institute, MEA	This MoU would help in exchange of trainees, students, faculty members and experts between India and Qatar to enhance their skills and improve the training programme in both the countries. Foreign Service Institute, MEA has signed MoU with several other countries for the purpose of exchanging information on structure and contents of training programmes for diplomats.

S. No.	Agreement/MoU	Remarks
5.	MoU for cooperation in the field of Radio and Television	This MoU intends to encourage regular exchange of radio and TV programmes and material between Prasar Bharati of India and Qatar Media Cooperation.
6.	Agreement for Mutual Cooperation and Exchange of News	The agreement between Qatari News Agency and United News of India is to enhance and develop bilateral cooperation in the field of exchange of English-language news on daily basis and free of charge

*Source: Press Information Bureau of India, New Delhi,*  
<http://www.pib.nic.in/newsite/pmreleases.aspx?mincode=3>

#### **24. Embassy Open House, Doha, 27 March 2015**

The monthly Open House to address urgent consular and labour issues/cases of Indian nationals in the State of Qatar was held at the Embassy premises on Friday, 27 March 2015. R.K. Singh, Charge d'Affaires and other officials met all the complainants, discussed their problems and assured them that the Embassy would actively follow up their cases with the authorities concerned in Government of Qatar. Arvind Patil, President of Indian Community Benevolent Forum (ICBF), a community association working under the aegis of the Embassy for the welfare of Indian workers also attended the Open House.

An Embassy team visited the Central Prison and Deportation Centre this week to enquire about the welfare of detainees from India. The total number of Indian nationals in the Central Prison and the Deportation Centre is currently 92 and 144, respectively. During the current year, the Labour and Community Welfare Section of the Embassy has received a total of 955 complaints, so far. The number of complaints received during the last three years is as follows:

Year	Number
2012	3,385
2013	3558
2014	3,943

The number of deaths registered in the Embassy in March 2015 [till 26 March 2015] is 15. The number of deaths registered in the last three years is as follows:

Year	Number
2012	237
2013	241
2014	279

On the basis of requests received from the Qatari authorities for travel documents for inmates in the Deportation Centre, the Embassy has issued 13 Emergency Certificates (ECs) in March 2015. The Embassy also issued 10 air tickets to Indian nationals in distress for their return to India in the month of March 2015. ICBF continues to help Indian workers through various welfare measures, including provision of air tickets, financial assistance and medical help. The assistance given by the ICBF to Indian nationals during March 2015 so far includes 5 air tickets for destitute workers.

*Source: Embassy of India, Doha,*

<http://www.indianembassyqatar.gov.in/pages/importantannouncements.php>

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## **i. SAUDI ARABIA**

### **25. PM's telephonic conversation with King Salman bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia, New Delhi, 30 March 2015**

His Majesty King Salman bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia called Prime Minister Narendra Modi this evening at 9.30 pm.

Prime Minister shared his deep concern about the safety and welfare of the approximately 4,000 Indian citizens in Yemen. Prime Minister briefed His Majesty King Salman on India's evacuation plan and requested His Majesty's support and cooperation in the evacuation of Indian citizens from Yemen.

His Majesty recalled the strong and close relations between India and Saudi Arabia and assured Prime Minister of his full attention to the safety of Indians in Yemen and all possible assistance for their early and safe evacuation.

Prime Minister expressed his gratitude to His Majesty and conveyed his best wishes to His Majesty for a quick resolution of the challenges in the region and early restoration of peace and stability under his leadership. Prime Minister also reaffirmed his commitment to further strengthening India's close relations with Saudi Arabia.

*Source: Press Information Bureau of India, New Delhi,*  
<http://www.pib.nic.in/newsite/pmreleases.aspx?mincode=3>

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### **26. Inauguration of Catalogue Show of Indian Companies at UTICA, Tunis, 17 March 2015**

Embassy of India, Tunis in coordination with Tunisian Union for Trade, Industry and Handicrafts (UTICA) organized a Catalogue Show of Indian companies at the UTICA premises on 17-18 March 2015. The Show was inaugurated by her Excellency Ambassador of India to Tunisia Nagma M. Mallick on 17 March 2015 in the presence of Tunisian business community and media. Catalogues of more than 140 Indian companies in diverse fields were on display at the show. In her inauguration speech, Ambassador Nagma Mallick thanked UTICA for hosting the Catalogue Show of Indian companies which would provide opportunities for trade and business partnerships and promotion of bilateral investment. The show coincided with the visit of

a large Tunisian business delegation comprising 23 members to India from 21-30 March 2015 organized by UTICA, Souse and UTICA Tunis. The second Tunisian business delegation was expected to visit India in April 2015. Ambassador expressed happiness about the business communities' deep interest to establish business and investment partnerships with each other and indicated there was great scope for improved trade relations between the two countries. She observed that the bilateral trade turnover between India and Tunisia was currently about US\$ 450 million and that there was great potential for increasing this turnover. Ambassador highlighted that India was currently the fastest-growing large economy in the world with a growth rate of GDP of 7.4 per cent in the current fiscal year. A growth rate of between 8 and 8.5 per cent in the fiscal year 2015-16 was anticipated. Thus, India is an extremely attractive investment destination and economic partner whose macro-economic indicators have improved dramatically since Prime Minister Modi's government took power in May 2014. India represents a growth opportunity to every country that wishes to partner it. She hoped that Tunisia and Tunisian entrepreneurs would also take advantage of the growth opportunity that India represents. She concluded by saying that the future for India-Tunisia cooperation was bright.

*Source: Embassy of India, Tunis, <http://www.embassyofindiatunis.com/pdf/Press%20Release-Catalogue%20Show%20on%2017%20March%202015.pdf>*

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### **27. Prime Minister Narendra Modi condemns attack in Tunisia, Tunisia, 18 March 2015**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has stated today: "Attack in Tunisia is appalling and condemnable. We stand firmly with the people of Tunisia in this hour of grief and pray normalcy returns soon".

*Source: Embassy of India, Tunisia,*

*[http://www.embassyofindiatunis.com/pdf/Press%20Release%20from%20Embassy%20of%20India,%20Tunisia\\_Eng.pdf](http://www.embassyofindiatunis.com/pdf/Press%20Release%20from%20Embassy%20of%20India,%20Tunisia_Eng.pdf)*

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## **MULTILATERAL ISSUE**

### **28. Agreement on completion of imprisonment in native country, New Delhi, 19 March 2015**

Will the Minister of Overseas Indian Affairs be pleased to state:-

(a) Whether it is a fact that most of the Indian inmates imprisoned abroad are languishing in the prisons of Gulf Countries, if so, the details thereof; and

(b) Whether India and UAE had signed an agreement in 2011, according to which the Indian prisoners languishing in the prisons of the UAE can complete their remaining sentence in the prisons of India, but no Indian prisoner has benefited from this agreement so far and if so, the details thereof?

**Answer:**



The Minister of State in the Ministry of External Affairs Gen. Dr V. K. Singh (Retd)

(a) 6,290 Indian nationals are detained in 72 countries. Out of these 2,909 (46.6 per cent of 6290) Indian prisoners are detained in 9 Gulf countries as detailed below:

S.N	Name of the Country	No. of Indian prisoners
1	Bahrain	106
2	Iran	36
3	Iraq	9
4	Kuwait	290
5	Oman	75
6	Qatar	96
7	Saudi Arabia	1,508
8	U.A.E	785
9	Yemen	4
	Total	2,909

(b) Yes. An agreement for Transfer of Sentenced persons has been signed between India and UAE.

As for the implementation of the agreement, till date only one case of an Indian national serving his sentence in UAE jail was forwarded by the UAE authorities, which has been forwarded by our Mission to the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, for further action.

To expedite the implementation of the agreement, Embassy of India, Abu Dhabi is in constant touch with the concerned local authorities. The requests for transfer to Indian jails under this agreement received during weekly jail visits by the officials of the Indian Mission and Post in the UAE are regularly forwarded to the concerned UAE authorities for processing at their end. As and when such cases for transfer to Indian jails are received from the local authorities, our Mission will immediately forward them to the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India for taking further action.

*Source: Rajya Sabha (Council of State), Unstarred Question No. 2444, asked by Prabhat Jha, <http://164.100.47.5/qsearch/OResult.aspx>*

### **29. Sending back of dead bodies of Indians, New Delhi, 12 March 2015**

Will the Minister of Overseas Indian Affairs be pleased to state:-

(a) the number of dead bodies of Indians that are still to be sent back home from Saudi Arabia and other countries; and

(b) the details of Indians died in Saudi Arabia in last two years and bodies sent back to their India homes with costs of transportation paid by Government and/ or the relatives of the deceased?

**Answer**

Minister of State for Overseas Indian Affairs Gen. V. K. Singh (Retd.)

(a) As reported by Indian Missions number of dead bodies of Indians still to be sent back from Saudi Arabia and other Emigration Check Required (ECR) countries are as under;

Sl. No.	Name of Countries	Dead bodies
1	Saudi Arabia	93
2	Bahrain	1
3	Libya	Nil
4	Jordan	Nil
5	Oman	3
6	United Arab Emirates	2
7	Sudan	Nil
8	Yemen	Nil
9	Qatar	4
10	Kuwait	7
11	Lebanon	2
12	Indonesia	Nil
13	Afghanistan	Nil
14	South Sudan	Nil
15	Iraq	Nil
16	Malaysia	1
17	Syria	Nil
18	Thailand	Nil

(b) Details of Indians who died in Saudi Arabia during the last two years and bodies sent back to their Indian homes with costs of transportation paid by Government and /or the relatives of the deceased are given below.

Year	No. of death Local burials	Transported back to India	No. of mortal remains transported Government cost through ICWF*	Total cost (in Rs.)
2013	2,472	1,326	1145 61	33,71,414
2014	2,348	1,229	1106 50	24,09,563

\* Indian Community Welfare Fund

*Source: Rajya Sabha (Council of State), Unstarred Question No. 1680, asked by Tarun Vijay, <http://164.100.47.5/qsearch/QResult.aspx>*

**Note:** The Exact web links for the questions in the Indian Parliament are non-functional due to technical reasons. They can be searched through the question number or the name of the Member of Parliament concerned at the Websites <http://rajyasabha.nic.in/> of Rajya Sabha and <http://loksabha.nic.in/> of Lok Sabha.

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**Creore =10 million. Lakh=100,000**

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