

# **INDIA SPEAKS**

(Monthly Digest of Official Indian Statements on Middle East)

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## **BILATERAL ISSUES**

### **a. ALGERIA**

#### **1. President of India's Message on the Eve of Independence Day of Algeria, New Delhi, 4 July 2015**

The President of India Pranab Mukherjee extended his greetings and felicitations to the Government and people of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria on the eve of their Independence Day (5 July 2015).

In his message to His Excellency Abdelaziz Bouteflika, the President of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, the President has said, "On behalf of the Government, the people of India and on my own behalf, it gives me great pleasure to extend to you and to the people of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria warm greetings and felicitations on the occasion of your Independence Day.

India cherishes its warm and friendly relations with Algeria. I would like to reiterate India's commitment to enhancing our bilateral relations in the coming months to new areas of co-operation, as identified by our two sides.

Please accept, Excellency, my good wishes for Your Excellency's good health and well being as well as for the progress and prosperity of the friendly people of Algeria."

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

#### **2. PM greets the people of Algeria on Algeria's Independence Day, New Delhi, 5 July 2015**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi greeted the people of Algeria on Algeria's Independence Day.

"My best wishes to the people of Algeria on their Independence Day. We consider Algeria a valued friend with whom we have strong ties. I hope our relations with Algeria become even stronger in the coming years," the Prime Minister said.

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

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## **b. EGYPT**

### **3. Fight against Terrorism, Cairo, 01 July 2015**

“We strongly condemn the terrorist attack in Cairo and express our heartfelt condolences to the family of the deceased. As a country that has faced some of the most egregious acts of terrorism, India stands firmly by Egypt in its fight against terrorism.”

*Source: Embassy of India, Cairo, [http://www.indembcairo.com/en-us/presscentre/pressreleases.aspx?udt\\_656\\_param\\_detail=45320](http://www.indembcairo.com/en-us/presscentre/pressreleases.aspx?udt_656_param_detail=45320)*

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### **4. Decay of Egyptian Mummy, New Delhi, 27 July 2015**

Will the Minister of Culture be pleased to state:

- (a) Whether the Egyptian Mummy preserved at Telangana State Museum in Hyderabad is slowly decaying due to lack of maintenance;
- (b) If so, the details thereof and the reasons therefore;
- (c) The steps taken by the Government for preservation of the said mummy; and
- (d) The funds allocated by the Government in this regard?

#### **Answer**

Minister of State (IC) for culture and Tourism and Minister of State for Civil Aviation (Dr. Mahesh Sharma)

(a) No.

(b) does not arise.

(c) Government of Telangana had taken advice from Dr. Trek el Awady, an Egyptian expert and has initiated action on the suggestions made by the expert. The mummy has now been under controlled temperature, the wooden showcase has been made airtight till the new oxygen free showcase is installed, photography with flashlights has been banned. The lighting in the mummy room is regulated.

(d) Government of Telangana has allocated Rs. 10.00 lakhs in the current financial year to improve the preservation of the mummy. This apart, the State Government has already spent Rs. 4.25 lakhs to improve the preservation of the mummy.

*Source: Lok Sabha (Council of People), Unstarred Question No.1140, asked by Muthamsetti Srinivas Rao, <http://164.100.47.132/LssNew/psearch/QResult16.aspx?qref=19808>*

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### **5. India mourns the passing away of Former President Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, Cairo, 28 July 2015**

The Embassy of India, Cairo joins the mourning at the passing away of former President of India, Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam. A condolence book will be opened at India House, Zamalek on 29-30 July 2015 from 1000 to 1300 hrs. Government of India has declared seven days state mourning to mark respect for the departed dignitary.

Dr. Kalam, who was President of India from 2002 to 2007, was sometimes affectionately known as the “missile man,” “scientist-patriot” and “people’s President” of India. During his term in the office, Kalam made the Presidential residence more accessible to ordinary Indians by hosting schoolchildren, farmers and scientists. He was the author of the best-selling book called ‘Ignited Minds — Unleashing the Power within India’. After completion of his term of office, he travelled across the country delivering lectures to academic institutions and connecting with the people, particularly the youth.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said in a televised address, “As a President, his life, his work and everything about him continues to show the way for India. His life-long efforts to deploy scientific intellect in making India powerful are truly the nation’s wealth. He used to say teaching was his passion, and he spent his last moments among the students doing what he loved most”. Former President Kalam passed away on 27 July, at the age of 83 following a cardiac arrest during a lecture titled ‘Liveable Planet Earth’ to business management graduate students in Shillong, India.

*Source: Embassy of India, Cairo, [http://www.indembcairo.com/en-us/presscentre/pressreleases.aspx?udt\\_656\\_param\\_detail=45352](http://www.indembcairo.com/en-us/presscentre/pressreleases.aspx?udt_656_param_detail=45352)*

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### **c. IRAN**

#### **6. Indo-Iran Ties, New Delhi, 22 July 2015**

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

- (a) Whether India has begun to reset its ties with Iran, notwithstanding the uncertainty surrounding the negotiations between the Persian Gulf nation and the P5+1;
- (b) Whether India is now keen to push for connectivity with Iran, which will pave the way for its entry into Afghanistan and the Central Asian region;
- (c) If so, the details thereof;
- (d) Whether the Government has also ignored cautionary voices from the United States not to rush into doing business with Iran till it firms up the nuclear deal with it; and
- (e) If so, the details thereof?

#### **Answer**

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

(a) to (e) India and Iran have traditionally enjoyed close, friendly and cooperative bilateral ties rooted in deep historical, cultural and civilization links. In recent years, bilateral ties have been characterized by frequent interactions at the highest levels including the recent meeting between Prime Minister and the President of Iran in Ufa, Russia on 9 July 2015 on the margins of the SCO Summit.

Since September 2000, India has been cooperating with Iran to develop the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) that will also include participation of Russia. In August 2014, a trial run of two containers was conducted on this corridor, followed by a visit of a Commerce

Ministry delegation in January 2015 that held further discussions related to its operationalization. During the visit of Minister of Shipping, Road Transport and Highways to Tehran from 5-7 May 2015, India and Iran also signed an inter-governmental Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) that will pave the way for bilateral cooperation in the development of the Iranian Port of Chabahar. These projects do aim to enhance India's connectivity to Afghanistan and countries of the Central Asian region.

India's bilateral relations with Iran stand on their own and are not influenced by India's relations with any third country.

*Source: Lok Sabha (Council of People), Unstarred Question No.447, asked by Ram Charitra, <http://164.100.47.132/LssNew/psearch/QResult16.aspx?qref=19101>*

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#### **d. IRAQ**

##### **7. President of India's message on the eve of National Day of Iraq, New Delhi, 13 July 2015**

The President of India Pranab Mukherjee has extended his greetings and felicitations to the Government and people of the Republic of Iraq on the eve of their National Day.

In his message to His Excellency Fuad Masum, the President of the Republic of Iraq, the President has said, "On behalf of the Government, the people of India and on my own behalf, it is with immense pleasure that I extend warm greetings and felicitations to Your Excellency and to the friendly people of Iraq on the occasion of your National Day.

India deeply values its close and friendly relations with the Republic of Iraq, which are rooted in ancient trade and cultural links and people-to-people contacts. We are confident that with the strong commitment of both our great nations, these ties will be further strengthened as we broaden our bilateral cooperation for the mutual benefit of the people of our two countries.

India strongly supports the Iraqi people and Government in their efforts to overcome the current crisis, uphold national sovereignty and preserve their territorial integrity.

Please accept, Your Excellency, my best wishes for your good health and well-being, and for the continued progress and prosperity of the friendly people of the Republic of Iraq."

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

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##### **8. Indians held Hostage in Iraq, New Delhi, 22 July 2015**

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

- (a) Whether the Union Government has sought any status report about the Indians including persons from Punjab held hostage by the ISIS in Iraq;
- (b) If so, the details in this regard; and
- (c) The steps being taken to secure their release?

**Answer**

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

(a) to (c) The safety and security of Indian nationals held captive by the ISIS in Mosul, Iraq, remain a matter of foremost concern and preoccupation for the Government of India. The Government of India is in close and regular contact with relevant Iraqi Government authorities to obtain information on their whereabouts and safety. As per latest information from multiple third party sources, they are all safe. The Government is making all efforts and taking all steps to secure their release.

Among the steps taken to secure their release, External Affairs Minister has personally spoken to her counterpart Foreign Ministers in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) as well as other friendly countries in the region to assist in locating Indian nationals held captive in Iraq.

*Source: Lok Sabha (Council of People), Unstarred Question No.329, asked by Santokh Singh Chaudhary, <http://164.100.47.132/LssNew/psearch/QResult16.aspx?gref=19065>*

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## **e. ISRAEL**

### **9. Extension of BTC Pipeline through Israel, New Delhi, 22 July 2015**

Will the Minister of State (Independent Charge) in the Ministry Of Petroleum and Natural Gas be pleased to state:

- (A) Whether oil from the Caspian is reaching Ceyhan in Turkey through the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline;
- (b) Whether India is pursuing a project to extend BTC through Israel to the Gulf of Aqaba to make available Caspian oil to countries of the Indian Ocean Rim, including India; and
- (c) Whether it is proposed to take this up during the Prime Minister's forthcoming visit to Israel?

#### **Answer**

The Minister of State (Independent Charge) in the Ministry Of Petroleum and Natural Gas [Dharmendra Pradhan]

- (a) The Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) oil pipeline connects Caspian region directly to the Mediterranean Sea through Turkey.
- (b) &(c): No such proposal is being considered in this Ministry at present.

*Source: Rajya Sabha (Council of State), Unstarred Question No.281, asked by Mani Shankar Aiyar <http://164.100.47.5/qsearch/QResult.aspx>*

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### **10. Defence Co-operation with Israel, New Delhi, 24 July 2015**

Will the Minister of Defence be pleased to state:-

- (a) Whether the Government has signed any agreement with Israel for co-operation in defence sector;
- (b) If so, the details thereof;
- (c) Whether Israel has expressed interest to share new technologies and innovative ideas with the Indian military; and
- (d) If so, the details thereof?

## **Answer**

Minister of Defence [Manohar Parrikar]

(a) & (b): A Memorandum of Undertakings (MoU) has been signed in July 2005 between Defence Research & Development Organisation (DRDO) of India and Directorate of Defence Research and Development (DDR&D), Israel on Defence Research and Development (R&D) Cooperation.

(c) & (d): DRDO has several defence R&D programmes with the DDR&D, Israel. Under this, Israel shares technology information, know-how, know-why and several R&D, collaborative research projects are undertaken. Further, DRDO and DDR&D meet annually under the aegis of Indo-Israel Management Council (IIMC) to pursue and discuss defence R&D activities.

*Source: Rajya Sabha (Council of State), Unstarred Question No.767, asked by Varun Feroze Gandhi, <http://164.100.47.132/LssNew/psearch/QResult16.aspx?qref=19583>*

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### **11. Defence Co-Operation with Israel, New Delhi, 24 July 2015**

A Memorandum of Undertakings (MoU) has been signed in July 2005 between Defence Research & Development Organisation (DRDO) of India and Directorate of Defence Research and Development (DDR&D), Israel on Defence Research and Development (R&D) Cooperation.

DRDO has several defence R&D programmes with the DDR&D, Israel. Under this, Israel shares technology information, know-how, know-why and several R&D, collaborative research projects are undertaken. Further, DRDO and DDR&D meet annually under the aegis of Indo-Israel Management Council (IIMC) to pursue and discuss defence R&D activities.

This information was given by Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar in a written reply to Feroze Varun Gandhi in Lok Sabha.

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

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## **f. JORDAN**

### **12. The Embassy of India organized an Indian Kathak Dance Night, Amman, 30 July 2015**

The Embassy of India in collaboration with the Indian Cultural Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR), New Delhi and the Ministry of Culture of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan organized an Indian Kathak Dance Night by prominent actor and danseuse Prachee Shah from 25-26 July 2015.

The troupe gave two performances in Jordan. On 25 July they performed at King Abdullah II Centre, Zarqa. The Chief Guest at the performance was Ma'amoun Talhani, Secretary General, Ministry of Culture of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. Speaking on the occasion Anil Trigunayat, Ambassador of India, highlighted the key aspects of bilateral relations between the two countries and informed the audience that the performance was part of the celebrations of the



65th anniversary of diplomatic relations between India and Jordan. The performance was highly appreciated by the local audience.

On 26 July 2015 the troupe gave a performance at the Jerash Festival. Jerash Festival is a prestigious festival and is held every year during the month of July. The event was attended and appreciated by a large number of gatherings and was highly appreciated.

*Source: Embassy of India, Amman, [http://indembassy-amman.org/Press\\_30\\_July\\_15\\_1.html](http://indembassy-amman.org/Press_30_July_15_1.html)*

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## **g. KUWAIT**

### **13. Average time taken to repatriate mortal remains of Indian nationals from Kuwait to India, Kuwait, 6 July 2015**

The Embassy has registered 290 deaths of Indian nationals during the period from 1 January 2015 to 30 June 2015. The mortal remains of 49 deceased Indian nationals were buried in Kuwait, as per the wishes of their family members, whereas mortal remains of 241 deceased Indian nationals were airlifted to India for last rites. The average time taken in Kuwait to repatriate mortal remains to India is 4 days.

*Source: Embassy of India, Kuwait, <http://www.indembkwt.org/DispNews.aspx?ID=809>*

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### **14. Visa charges for Kuwaiti nationals, Kuwait, 16 July 2015**

From 19 July 2015 onwards, Indian Passport and Visa Service Centres at Sharq and Fahaheel will function from 8 AM - 12 noon and then 4 PM - 8 PM on all working days. Visa charges for Kuwaiti nationals are as under:-

- (i) Tourist visa: 6 months multiple entry-----KD 13
- (ii) Business visa : 1 year multiple entry-----KD 38
- (iii) Business visa: 5 years multiple entry-----KD 63
- (iv) Transit visa : 15 days single/double entry-----KD 7
- (v) Student visa : 5 years multiple entry-----KD 24
- (vi) Medical visa: one year multiple entry-----KD 38

In cases of emergency, visas can be taken directly from Embassy on payment of applicable charges.

*Source: Embassy of India, Kuwait, <http://www.indembkwt.org/DispNews.aspx?ID=815>*

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### **15. Steps to be taken for transportation of human mortal remains to India, Kuwait, 22 July 2015**

1. Contact Consular Wing (Tel: 22530600 ext. 271 / 244) with a copy each of the (a) Passport / Civil identity card of the deceased, (b) Death Report issued by the hospital authorities / mortuary (c) Civil Identity Card of the person intimating the death to the Embassy and (d) letter from the employer (in case of company workers).

2. The Embassy will issue an authority letter in favour of the next of kin of deceased for collection of death certificate, passport, police report etc. from local authorities.

3. In an instance of police case, to approach police station to collect clearance from the police authorities.
4. To approach death and birth registration office of the area in which the deceased died, for obtaining the death certificate.
5. To approach death and birth registration office, Maidan Hawalli behind Police Station, either for collecting the death certificate or endorsing the death certificate issued by death and birth registration office of other governorates.
6. Death certificate issued by birth and death registration office. Endorsed by Main office of birth and death registration office (Maidan Hawalli). This is required to be attested by Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Consular Section, located at Shuwaikh which is next to Kuwait News Agency Building or Liberation Tower in Murgab.
7. After attestation from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the death certificate is required to be translated into English by any authorized translator in Kuwait.
- 8 To approach Embassy for registration of death: The following documents are required for registration of death in the Embassy.
  - (a) Original Passport of the deceased
  - (b) Passport copy of the deceased
  - (c) Death certificate in duplicate, duly attested by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the State of Kuwait.
  - (d) Translation of death certificate. (Duplicate)
  - (e) Two copies of Police report (in case of accidental death)
9. To approach any airlines and obtain ticket / airway bill with confirmed date and time for air-lifting of mortal remains. If you wish to send by Air India, please contact: Rajendran from House of Travels, Tel: 24315538 /48 Mob: 66588786, Najib Mobile: 99531193, Jaffer Mobile: 60744460.
10. Approach Al- Sabah Hospital (mortuary) for obtaining appointment for sealing of coffin box. The doctor will issue three slips (i) for Farwaniya mortuary or hospital where the body is kept for transfer of dead body to Sabah Hospital (ii) in-charge of coffin box (iii) Indian Embassy, Kuwait.
11. Approach the Embassy with the doctor's slip along with a copy of airway bill and passport copy of the deceased.
12. After sealing of the coffin box doctor will issue embalming certificate in Arabic which is to be translated into English and hand it over to the concerned representative of the airlines.



13. To approach three hours before the flight time to Al- Sabah Hospital main block for ambulance for transportation of the coffin box from the hospital's mortuary to the airport.

The above procedures/steps can also be seen on the following link: - <http://www.indembkwt.org/pages/death.aspx>

*Source: Embassy of India, Kuwait, <http://www.indembkwt.org/DispNews.aspx?ID=818>*

### **16. Advisory regarding narcotics/ drugs for Indian Community in Kuwait, Kuwait, 23 July 2015**

Unfortunately, there has been an increase in the arrest/ detention of Indian nationals in cases of alleged possession of drug & narcotics in Kuwait. At present, more than 60 percent of total Indian nationals who have been detained and are serving sentences in Central jail of Kuwait in cases relating to drugs/ narcotics.

2. It is to reiterate that anyone caught with drugs in Kuwait has to abide by the legal system of the country wherein the role of Embassy is restricted to minimum. The punishment under the Kuwaiti laws for violation of drug related crimes are often very severe and may lead to life imprisonment or even execution. Moreover, in Kuwait, a person is considered guilty until he/she is proven innocent and that the person knew nothing about the drugs makes it often very difficult to prove. Bail in such cases is usually not given and one has to spend several months in detention while the case progresses through the judicial system. Therefore, one must strictly obey rules and regulations regarding the laws about drugs in this country.

3. The Embassy would like to re-emphasise the following information for the attention of the Indian Community in Kuwait:

4. What are Narcotics/Drugs?

There are, generally, many kinds of drugs some are prescribed while others are known as club drugs, illicit or illegal substance and designer drugs, which include:

- (i) Antidepressants,
- (ii) Barbiturates,
- (iii) Cannabis,
- (iv) Depressants,
- (v) Hallucinogens,
- (vi) Inhalants,
- (vii) Narcotics [Marijuana, Morphine, Cocaine, Heroin, Dry ICE, LSD, MDMA (ecstasy), amphetamines (speed)].
- (viii) Steroids,
- (ix) Stimulants,
- (x) Tobacco.

(The list is only indicative and not exhaustive).

5. Suggestions for taking precaution and/or safety tips for Indian community :It is observed that some people become an unwitting/ unknowingly drug carriers when they accept the request of their friend(s) or relative(s) by accepting packets/ gifts/ small bags etc in India for delivering to their contacts in Kuwait. One can avoid becoming an unwitting drug carrier by refusing such items where its contents are not clear. Also, always remain attentive so that drug dealers might not hide drugs in your luggage at the airport. Always get your luggage sealed at the airport & never leave your luggage unattended. Besides never take a parcel for another person without checking what's inside. One should strictly avoid accepting any such packet or gift from strangers at airport or with a person you develop friendship during travel. These things may contain narcotics or prohibited medicines which would result in arrest and punishment in Kuwait.

6. Further, the monetary temptation should be avoided where you are asked to visit a place, hold a packet, keep packet/ friends attaché/ suitcase with you for some time, keep friend's bag in your room, etc as these are some of the tricks which may land you up in the police net with jail term for transporting/ possessing narcotics. Taxi drivers should avoid carrying any bag without the owner on board and should remain vigilant in case passenger tried to leave something in the car while alighting.

6. Use/carrying of Prescription Medicine from India to Kuwait. The general medicine should be brought with doctor's prescription and the quantity should not exceed the requirement of two weeks. Further, Ayurvedic/Homeopathic medicine due to its composition can be construed as containing alcohol while narcotics can be camouflaged as white sugar pills. Hence, one should be careful while bringing these medicines and must carry doctor's prescription and possess limited quantity. One must check also with the Kuwaiti authorities about latest updates on regulations governing carrying of medicines from abroad.

7. The above guidelines are indicative and issued in the interest of the Indian community for taking adequate precautions and to strictly observe the laws of land relating to narcotics/ drugs in Kuwait.

8. Your suggestions/ comments in the matter may please be sent to the Embassy.

*Source: Embassy of India, Kuwait, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WUZD2FxXI7s>*

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### **17. Opening of a condolence book in the embassy, Kuwait, 28 July 2015**

Following the sad demise of Dr A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, former President of India (2002-07), on 27 July 2015, the Government of India is observing a seven-day State mourning in the honour of Dr Abdul Kalam from 27 July – 2 August 2015, as a mark of deep respect to the departed Indian leader.

A condolence book will be kept open at the Embassy on Wednesday, 29 July 2015 and Thursday, 30 July 2015 from 0930 hrs -1230 hrs and from 1430 hrs-1700 hrs for the members of

Indian community in Kuwait to facilitate all those who wish to pay their homage to Dr A.P.J. Abdul Kalam.

*Source: Embassy of India, Kuwait, <http://www.indembkwt.org/DispNews.aspx?ID=820>*

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#### **h. MOROCCO**

##### **18. Dinesh K. Patnaik appointed as the next Ambassador of India to Kingdom of Morocco, New Delhi, 2 July 2015**

Dinesh K. Patnaik (IFS: 1990), presently Ambassador of India in Phnom Penh, has been appointed as the next Ambassador of India to Kingdom of Morocco. 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/25424/Dinesh\\_K\\_Patnaik\\_appointed\\_as\\_the\\_next\\_Ambassador\\_of\\_India\\_to\\_Kingdom\\_of\\_Morocco](http://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/25424/Dinesh_K_Patnaik_appointed_as_the_next_Ambassador_of_India_to_Kingdom_of_Morocco)*

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#### **i. PALESTINE**

##### **19. H.E. Anil Wadhwa, Secretary, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India is on a two day official visit to Palestine from 8-9 July 2015, New Delhi, 8 July 2015**

H.E. Wadhwa called on H.E. Mahmoud Abbas, President of the State of Palestine. During the meeting both sides discussed bilateral relations and issues relating to the West Asia and the stalled Middle East Peace Process. He also met senior officials in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, State of Palestine.

H.E. Wadhwa would call on H.E. Dr. Rami Hamdallah, Prime Minister of the State of Palestine tomorrow. H.E. Wadhwa will also inaugurate Jawaharlal Nehru Secondary School for Girls in Asera Al-Shamalyeh. The project is a gift from the Government and People of India to Palestine. The school is one of the Indian projects in Palestine and is a part of India's capacity building initiatives in Palestine.

The other ongoing projects of Government of India in Palestine include Jawaharlal Nehru Secondary Boys School in Abu Dees, setting up of India-Palestine Centre for Excellence in ICT and Digital Learning & Innovation Centre in Al Quds University (with a satellite centre in Ramallah) and Supply of Technical & Vocational Education Training (TVET) Equipment and Training Services to Seven Vocational Training Centres in Palestine.

*Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, [http://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/25444/Visit\\_of\\_Secretary\\_East\\_to\\_Palestine](http://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/25444/Visit_of_Secretary_East_to_Palestine)*

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#### **j. TUNISIA**

##### **20. L. Prashant Pise appointed as the next Ambassador of India to the Republic of Tunisia, New Delhi, 17 July 2015**

L. Prashant Pise (IFS: 1995), presently Minister, HCL, London, has been appointed as the next Ambassador of India to the Republic of Tunisia. 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/25490/L\\_Prashant\\_Pise\\_appointed\\_as\\_the\\_next\\_Ambassador\\_of\\_India\\_to\\_the\\_Republic\\_of\\_Tunisia](http://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/25490/L_Prashant_Pise_appointed_as_the_next_Ambassador_of_India_to_the_Republic_of_Tunisia)*

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## **k. YEMEN**

### **21. Travel Advisory on Yemen, New Delhi, 30 July 2015**

The security situation in Yemen continues to be fragile. The United Nations has raised the humanitarian crisis level of Yemen to the highest rung. Shortages of food items, cooking gas, diesel, petrol etc continue and water and electricity supply are also severely affected. Conflict and bombings still continue and Government of India has already issued an Advisory for avoiding travel to Yemen for its nationals. Since it will still take time for normalcy to return to Yemen, Indian nationals are once again advised to refrain from undertaking travel to Yemen.

*Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, [http://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/25542/Travel\\_Advisory\\_on\\_Yemen](http://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/25542/Travel_Advisory_on_Yemen)*

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## **I. MULTILATERAL ISSUE**

### **22. Seizing of passports of Indians abroad, New Delhi, 30 July 2015**

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

- (a) Whether it is a fact that most employers in the Gulf countries seize the passports of Indians engaged by them;
- (b) Whether any such instances have been brought to the notice of the Indian embassies in the Gulf region, if so, how many of such victims are from Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, what steps are taken to help these victims;
- (c) Whether Government proposes to take up the issue at the diplomatic level with the countries concerned to end the menace; and
- (d) Whether Government considers offering counselling to Gulf bound youth, particularly seekers of low paid jobs before immigration clearance is given?

### **Answer**

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

(a) As per reports received from Indian Missions/Posts in the Gulf Cooperation Council countries in July 2015, it is seen that the practice of keeping the passports of Indian workers by the employers is quite prevalent, though some countries have enacted laws against this, as shown below:

- (i) Saudi Arabia has enacted a law which provides that the passports of the workers should be in their possession.
- (ii) As per Qatari Labour laws sponsors/employers have no right to seize/retain the passports of expatriate workers in their custody.
- (iii) Bahrain Labour laws do not permit employer to retain the passports of their employees.
- (iv) UAE Government has given standing instructions about holders being allowed to retain their passports.

(b) Labour complaints received in such Indian Missions/Posts also relate to the passport being held by their sponsors. These Missions/Posts issue identity documents to those workers who do not possess their passports with them for returning to India. All the Indian Missions/Posts in GCC countries do not maintain state wise data of such victims.

(c) The Government has signed MoUs on labour with major labour receiving countries including UAE, Qatar, Oman and Bahrain. Under these MoUs/Agreement, Joint Working Groups are constituted to find solutions to bilateral labour problems.

(d) The Ministry operates a 24x7 helpline (1800 11 3090) in 11 languages where all emigrants and prospective emigrants can have their doubts/queries related to overseas employment clarified.

Also, Migrant Resource Centres have been set up in Cochin, Hyderabad, Gurgaon and Chennai for providing information, guidance and counselling for intending migrants on overseas employment.

*Source: Rajya Sabha (Council of State), Unstarred Question No.1196, asked by Dr. K.V.P. Ramachandra Rao, <http://164.100.47.5/qsearch/qsearch.aspx>*

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**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.

**1 Crore = 10 million. Lakh = 100,000**

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## **Compiled by Jatin Kumar**

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