



MEI INDIA WATCH

(Monthly survey of India's relations with the Middle East)

No. 3

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Compiled by

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Political Issues

Iran

1. India to engage with Iran on Afghanistan

Thursday, 18 March 2010

New Delhi: India would soon hold high-level discussions with Iran towards stabilization in Afghanistan and to develop alternate energy transit sources and routes. It has been engaging with Central Asian countries of Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan and these consultations on Afghanistan and energy were a part of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's meeting with his Prime Minister Vladimir Putin of Russia and King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia during his recent visit to both the countries. India is keen on closer engagement with Iran and the Central Asian states in view of the close linkages with western and northern Afghanistan. In the area of energy, India has broached with Turkmenistan, the possibility of sending its gas to Northern Iran.

Source: The Hindu, Chennai

For full report: <http://www.thehindu.com/2010/03/18/stories/2010031863731200.htm>

2. Iran to host nuclear disarmament meet, wants India's support

Thursday, 25 March 2010

New Delhi: In spite of the recent hiccups in its relations with India over nuclear programme, Iran is looking forward to Indian participation in a conference on nuclear disarmament in Tehran in April. Iran is expected to formally extend an invitation to the government for participation of officials and nuclear experts. It remains to be seen how India would respond to the conference, because New Delhi's official position has been that of Iran having to abide by the NPT (Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty) to which it (Iran) is a signatory.

Source: The Times of India, New Delhi

For full report: <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Iran-to-host-nuclear-disarmament-meet-wants-India-support/articleshow/5720525.cms>

3. Snubbed S M Krishna drops Iran visit

Tuesday, 30 March 2010

New Delhi: India's attempts to step up engagement with Iran on crucial regional issues including Afghanistan appears to have suffered a setback with Foreign Minister, S M Krishna calling off his visit to Tehran amid signs of indifference on the part of the hosts. India refrained from taking issue with Iran but sources said that Tehran's fickleness over dates could be because of India's stand in the International Atomic Energy Agency over the Iranian nuclear programme Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's visit to Tehran is also on hold even though the two sides have placed it on the agenda for more than a year.

Source: The Times of India, New Delhi

For full report: <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/5740629.cms>

Israel

4. Intention to disrupt Indo-Israeli relations says prosecution

Wednesday, 10 March 2010

Mumbai: While presenting his arguments for the charge of waging war under section 121 of the Indian Penal Code, Special Public Prosecutor Ujjwal Nikam for the 26/11 terror attacks in Mumbai, contested that the intention of the handlers to kill Israeli nationals was to disrupt the friendly ties between India and Israel. Basing his arguments on the judicial confession of the lone surviving accused Mohammed Ajmal Amir Kasab, he observed: 'All attackers were told to selectively kill American, British and Israeli nationals for the injustice done [by respective countries] to Muslims.'

The prosecutor argued that handlers gave Imran Babar (one of the terrorists) clear instructions to kill Israelis to dampen the friendly bilateral relations so that indo-Israeli ties would deteriorate. However, Judge M L Tahaliyan asked Nikam if the intention could be taken as inciting a war between the two countries instead of being related to the 'so called atrocities by Israel on Palestine.'

Source: The Hindu, Chennai

For full report: <http://beta.thehindu.com/news/national/article228927.ece>

Kuwait

5. India praises Kuwait's support

Tuesday, 30 March 2010

New Delhi: During his meeting with Kuwaiti Ambassador in India Sami Al-Sulaiman, the Minister of State for Corporate Affairs Salman Khursheed praised Kuwait's support to poor communities in India. The Ambassador said that the Minister briefed him on the plans of the Indian government to combat poverty and illiteracy and to develop rural communities. The Minister also called for the member-states of the Gulf Cooperation Council to contribute to development projects in India. The Ambassador further stated that his country was willing to support development projects especially in rural areas.

Source: The Kuwait Times, Safat.

For full report: http://www.kuwaitimes.net/read_news.php?newsid=MTM3MDM4NzM2

6. Gulf has special focus in India's foreign policy: Tharoor

Monday, 22 March 2010

Kochi: Union Minister of State for External Affairs, Shashi Tharoor said that the Gulf regions enjoyed a special focus in India's foreign policy and that the country had a vital stake in the stability, security and economic well being of the Gulf. 'Maritime linkages... have transformed and diversified into political, economic, strategic and cultural linkages, investment and a significant contribution of the Indian Diaspora to the well being of both India and the Gulf' said Tharoor in his key note address at a seminar on *Maritime Linkages Between India and The Gulf — Old foundations, New Perspectives* held in Kochi.

Tharoor had highlighted the growing bilateral trade between India and the Gulf Cooperation Council in addition to the annual remittances transfer by the Indian expatriate community in the Gulf. On energy security, he expressed that nearly 75 percent of India's crude oil requirement was met from the Gulf region. Further, he referred to the new emphasis on energy diplomacy as reflected in India's successful bidding of oil blocks in Yemen, Qatar and Oman.

Source: The Hindu, Chennai

For full report: <http://www.thehindu.com/2010/03/22/stories/2010032256981200.htm>

See also: <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics/nation/Gulf-has-a-special-focus-in-Indias-foreign-policy-Tharoor/articleshow/5708600.cms>

Hajj

7. Govt probes 'bungling' in Hajj pilgrimage Thursday, 4 March 2010

New Delhi: The government is quietly investigating into charges of corruption in the Hajj pilgrimage from India last year. There are complaints of over 3000 seats having been sold bypassing the official procedures. These 3000 plus seats were created due to last minute cancellations by pilgrims. Sources have told that a high level probe has been initiated after complaints reached the Prime Minister's Office, Ministry of External Affairs and Cabinet Secretariat.

What has upset the establishment was the role of the officials in the Indian Hajj Committee based in Mumbai. Despite repeated attempts, the Hajj Committee of India's CEO Mohammed Owais was not available for comments.

Source: The Indian Express, New Delhi

For full report: <http://www.indianexpress.com/news/govtprobesbunglinginhajjpilgrimage/586624/>

8. Mohsina Kidwai elected Hajj panel chief

Thursday, 11 March 2010

New Delhi: Senior Congress leader and Rajya Sabha member Mohsina Kidwai has been elected Chairperson of the Hajj Committee. Hasan Ahmed and Aloo Bucker were elected Vice-Chairpersons. The committee was reconstituted recently, of which the Ministry of External Affairs is the nodal authority for its administration.

Source: The Hindu, Chennai

For full report: <http://www.thehindu.com/2010/03/11/stories/2010031164121300.htm>

Saudi Arabia

9. BJP wants Manmohan, Tharoor to explain remarks in Saudi Arabia

Wednesday, 3 March 2010

New Delhi: The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has indicated that it would ask Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and his Cabinet colleague Shashi Tharoor to 'explain' what they meant by saying India should talk to Saudi Arabia about Pakistan inspired terrorism. Spokesperson Prakash Javadekar said that the party would ask the Prime Minister to explain his comments in the Parliament. The party also objected to the Prime Minister's comment that he did not ask King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia to persuade Pakistan to desist from the path of sponsoring and abetting terrorism.

Further, Javadekar stated that the party did not see the difference between 'mediator' and interlocutor' and took a strong exception to Tharoor's remark describing Saudi Arabia as a 'valuable interlocutor' for India with Pakistan on the subject of terrorism. He charged the Congress with trying to change the consensus on a bilateral approach to solving all outstanding issues between India and Pakistan.

Source: The Hindu, Chennai

For full report: <http://www.thehindu.com/2010/03/03/stories/2010030361491100.htm>

10. Saudi visit highly successful: Krishna

Thursday, 4 March 2010

New Delhi: India and Saudi Arabia have decided to raise their cooperation to a strategic partnership covering security, economic, defence and political areas. Making a *sumo moto* statement in both the Houses of parliament on --- External Affairs Minister, S M Krishna said that Prime Minister's visit to Saudi Arabia was 'highly successful.' The most important outcome was the signing of the historic Riyadh Declaration in which two countries decided to raise cooperation to a strategic partnership. He further stated that both leaders emphasized on the importance of strengthening the strategic energy partnership.

Source: The Hindu, Chennai

For full report: <http://beta.thehindu.com/news/national/article148829.ece>

United Arab Emirates

11. UAE, India set to firm up ties

Friday, 12 March 2010

Dubai: Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, the Vice-President and Prime Minister of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and ruler of Dubai, reached in New Delhi on 11 March on a two-day visit. He held with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on a range of business, political and security issues. This visit was seen as a prelude to the visits by Vice-President Hamid Ansari and Prime Minister Singh to the UAE

Sheikh Mohammad was accompanied by a high-level delegation that included Dubai Deputy Ruler Sheikh Maktoum bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Chairman of Dubai Civil Aviation and Chief Executive of The Emirates Group Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al Maktoum,

Dubai Police Chief Lt. General Dahi Khalfan Tamim and Governor of Dubai International Financial Centre Ahmed Humaid Al Tayer.

Source: The Hindu, Chennai

For full report: <http://beta.thehindu.com/news/international/article237135.ece>

See also:

http://www.uaeinteract.com/docs/Mohammed_Bin_Rashid_meets_Indian_Prime_Minister_/40091.htm

12. Seven Indians languishing in Dubai jail

Sunday, 14 March 2010

Dubai: Seven Indians are among 24 death row convicts currently languishing in jail in the UAE. Of the seven, Paul George Nadar, 64, who is in Central jail since 1985 has become the longest serving convict on death row in the Emirate. Another Indian, Anil Motyati Adho 38, has been in Dubai prison since 1999. Nadar, an Indian carpenter was charged of killing two women and seven children. Five cases, including the recent one of a child rape-murder are still under appeal.

Source: The Hindu, Chennai

For full report: <http://beta.thehindu.com/news/national/article244682.ece>

13. 17 Indians get death penalty in UAE for killing Pak National

Tuesday, 30 March 2010

New Delhi: Seventeen Indians have been sentenced to death by a Sharjah Sharia court in Sharjah for killing a Pakistani and leaving three others injured in an attack in January 2009. The attack followed a fight over the control of illegal liquor business in the Al Sajaa area of Sharjah. The Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs said that it had sought a report from the Consulate in Sharjah. Although, initial reports suggest that the majority of those involved are in the age group of 17-30, the Ministry is seeking details of all and the exact nature of the case. Minister for Overseas Indian Affairs Vayalar Ravi stated: 'We will do everything possible to save their lives. We have decided to extend all possible help in fighting the case.'

Source: The Indian Express, New Delhi

For full report:

<http://www.indianexpress.com/news/17indiansgetdeathpenaltyinuaeforkillingpaknational/597473/>

Yemen

14. Yemen, India to boost up security joint cooperation

Wednesday, 24 March 2010

Sana'a: Yemen and India agreed to form joint technical committees to discuss mutual security cooperation. The Yemeni-India ministerial committee also agreed on holding the committee's meetings alternately in the two capitals. Yemen and India approved of enhancing cooperation in areas of judiciary, health, security, oil, gas and to establish shared investments. The two countries agreed on increasing scholarships of Yemeni students in Indian Universities to 50 yearly in addition to establishing a Yemeni-Indian friendship association

Source: Yemen News Agency SABA, Sana'a.

For full report: <http://www.sabanews.net/en/news209620.htm>

Security Issues

Israel

15. India to get Second Phalcon AWACS on Thursday

Wednesday, 24 March 2010

New Delhi: On 25 March India received the second of its three Phalcon Airborne Warning and Control Systems (AWACS) from Israel. From Jamnagar in Gujarat it proceeded to the AWACS home base in Agra. Under the US\$ 1.1 billion deal signed in March 2004, for Phalcon early warning radar and communication suite has been mounted on Russian IL-76 military aircraft in a tripartite project involving India, Israel and Russia. The Phalcon AWACS have boosted India's capabilities to detect and track troop build-ups or aircraft movement farther than ground-based radars.

Source: The Times of India, New Delhi

For full report: <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/India-to-get-second-Phalcon-AWACS-on-Thursday/articleshow/5716778.cms>

16. India lines up Israeli drones in race with Pakistan

Friday, 26 March 2010

New Delhi: In a latest contract with Israel Aerospace Industries, India has ordered a few more 'Heron' MALE (Medium Altitude, long endurance) drones, ground control systems and data terminals for around Rs. 700 crore. Apart from using the Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) for spying and directing precision guided munitions, IAF is now looking to induct Israeli Harpy 'killer' UAVs from 2011 onwards.

Source: Economic Times, New Delhi

For full report: <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics/nation/India-lines-up-Israeli-drones-in-race-with-Pakistan/articleshow/5725711.cms>

Energy Issues

Iran

17. India for pipeline talks in Tehran

Friday, 19 March 2010

New Delhi: While Iran and Pakistan have signed an agreement to implement the long delayed gas pipeline, India said that it has proposed trilateral talks in Tehran in May to sort out concerns and issues that were impeding India from joining the Iran-Pakistan-India pipeline project. New Delhi has boycotted pipeline talks since 2008 after its concerns about safe delivery of gas were ignored. It wants Iran to be responsible for the safe passage of gas through Pakistan and that it would pay for the fuel only at its delivery at the Pakistan-India border.

On the other hand, Iran had suggested a trilateral mechanism with contractual provisions involving the three countries to ensure safe delivery of gas to India. Under this system, New Delhi would have to pay for its share even if supplies were to be disrupted in Pakistan. External Affairs Minister S M Krishna said that India's concerns about pricing and security had been taken up with the government of Iran.

Source: The Hindu, Chennai

For full report: <http://www.thehindu.com/2010/03/19/stories/2010031962631000.htm>

18. Ignore Pak, ask Iran for gas via sea: MEA

Sunday, 21 March 2010

New Delhi: The Ministry of External Affairs has advised the government to walk out of the proposed Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline but continue talks with Tehran for a deep sea pipeline that avoids Pakistan. This is in light of the road-block in ties with Islamabad. Endorsing MEA's position, officials from the National Security Council Secretariat cautioned that the IPI pipeline would be a potential target of India-specific terror groups in Pakistan. Pakistan signed two pacts with Iran that deems India's participation in the project at a later date. The pipeline through Pakistan is envisaged to carry 60 million standard cubic metres of gas per day of which half would be meant for India.

Source: The Indian Express, New Delhi

For full report: <http://www.indianexpress.com/news/ignore-pak-ask-iran-for-gas-via-sea-mea/593543/>

19. Deora: ready to talk to Iran, Pakistan on pipeline project

Wednesday, 31 March 2010

Cancun (Mexico): India announced its readiness to hold talks with both Pakistan and Iran on putting back on track the US\$ 8 billion Iran-Pakistan-India pipeline project provided both the nations were ready to address the security concerns of New Delhi. Petroleum and Gas Minister Murli Deora did not rule out the possibility of holding talks with his Iranian and Pakistani counterparts. 'We need certain assurances of supply of gas and also the point of delivery of gas from Iran' he said. India has proposed for trilateral talks in Tehran in May and a response is awaited for from Iran.

Deora further said that India also has concerns regarding the pricing of the gas from Iran and clarified that India was not under pressure from any country not to proceed with the project. It has concerns over security as the pipeline would pass through the volatile Baluchistan which has fuelled its apprehensions over the pipeline. It has been indicated that the pipeline project would be one of major issues to be discussed at the next meeting of India-Iran joint working group.

Source: The Hindu, Chennai

For full report: <http://www.thehindu.com/2010/03/31/stories/2010033157841200.htm>

Qatar

20. Qatar offers more LNG to India

Tuesday, 23 March 2010

New Delhi: Qatar has agreed to supply four million tonnes of gas (Liquefied Natural Gas) in ships to India but wants over \$10 per unit ----. This is more than double the \$4.20 unit price set by the government for fuel from the Andhra offshore field operated by Reliance India Ltd. Qatar's nod came at the bilateral talks between its Deputy Prime Minister and Energy Minister Abdullah bin Hamad al Attiyah and Petroleum Minister Murli Deora. Petroleum Secretary B Sundareshan said that supplies would 'of course be subject to price negotiations which we will enter now.'

Industry sources stated that Qatar might be taking advantage as the Oil Ministry displays desperation for LNG. The sources said that at best the price should not be more than US\$ 5-6 per unit or the range in the spot market.

Source: The Times of India, New Delhi

For full report: <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/biz/india-business/Qatar-offers-more-LNG-to-India/articleshow/5714182.cms>

Yemen

21. Yemen-India oil talks held

Wednesday, 24 March 2010

Sana'a: An Indian delegation headed by Secretary (East) in the Ministry of External Affairs Latha Reddy reached Sana'a on 24 March to discuss cooperation and investment opportunities in oil, gas, minerals and energy. The Yemeni delegation was headed by Oil and Minerals Ministers Amir al – Aidrous. The Minister added that India is one of the largest targeted markets and called for the development of Yemeni-Indian relations to serve economic development and common interests. Ms. Reddy also expressed a desire to boost Indian investment in the field of oil exploration in Yemen.

Source: Yemen News Agency, SABA, Sana'a

For full report: <http://www.sabanews.net/en/news209637.htm>

Economic Issues

22. Lack of Sharia norms hurts SBI's West Asia growth

Wednesday, 3 March 2010

Bahrain: The State Bank of India (SBI) said that it is losing out on banking opportunities in the Middle East because of the absence of regulations on Islamic Banking in India. Islamic banking

entails carrying out banking activities in accordance with the tenets of Islamic Law (Sharia). SBI's regional head and CEO for Middle East, West Asia and North Africa Farooque Shahab said: 'The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is yet to frame regulations on monitoring Islamic banking operations of banks registered in India. Unless they come out with those rules, even foreign offices of Indian banks cannot start offering these products. Bankers from India are losing out on opportunities here.' However, he also added that the RBI was considering allowing banks to offer Islamic banking services. 'It may take some time, but it will happen' he said.

Source: The Economic Times, New Delhi

For full report: <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/news-by-industry/banking/finance/banking/Lack-of-Sharia-norms-hurts-SBIs-West-Asia-growth/articleshow/5635209.cms>

23. Work on Gulf Finance House EDZ begins

Monday, 8 March 2010

Mumbai: The construction work on the US\$10 billion (Rs 455 billion) Gulf Finance House Economic Development Zone (GFH EDZ) in Mumbai formally commenced with the Chief Minister of Maharashtra Ashok Chavan performing the ground breaking ceremony. The project is promoted by the Bahrain-based GFH, one among the successful and innovative Islamic investment banks in West Asia. The GFH EDZ is spread over an area of 1700 acres at Panvel and would be the largest foreign direct investment driven integrated development project.

The project comprises three distinct components: Energy City, IT and Telecom City and Entertainment. On completion, the project would house around 140,000 residents and is expected to generate direct employment to over 250,000 people and provide indirect employment to 750,000 people.

Source: The Hindu, Chennai

For full report: <http://beta.thehindu.com/news/national/article202552.ece>

24. Bharti clinches 2nd biggest outbound deal

Monday, 29 March 2010

New Delhi: Bharti Airtel clinched a US\$10.7 million deal with Zain Africa. With this, the company moves to become the world's seventh largest telecom operator by subscriber base. However, the deal does not include Zain's operations in Sudan and its investment in Morocco owing to ownership disputes. The deal is the second biggest outbound deal by an Indian company following Tata Steel's acquisition of Corus and UK's Vodafone acquiring Hutch.

Source: The Financial Express, New Delhi

For full report: <http://www.financialexpress.com/news/Bharti-clinches-second-biggest-outbound-deal/596740/>

See Also: <http://www.indianexpress.com/news/bharti-clinches-second-biggest-outbound-deal/595818/>

Israel

25. Israel Chemicals signs new Indian potash supply deals

Monday, 22 March 2010

Jerusalem: Israel Chemicals (ICL) has signed new potash supply contracts in India. The ICL, the world's sixth largest maker of potash said that it would supply clients with 430,000 tonnes of potash at US\$370 per tonne for one year starting in April. On 18 March the ICL announced another deal for the supply of one million tonnes of potash. The total deal of 1.43 million tonnes is the largest ICL deal with India.

Source: Reuters India, London

For full report: <http://in.reuters.com/article/domesticNews/idINLDE62LOU820100322>

Kuwait

26. India offers stakes in petrochemical plants to Kuwait

Wednesday, 31 March 2010

Cancun (Mexico): India has offered Kuwait a stake in Oil and Natural Gas Cooperation's petrochemical plant in Gujarat and Indian Oil Corporation's proposed chemical unit in Paradip. Kuwait Petroleum Corporation has often spurned offers for stakes in Indian refinery projects like its Saudi counterpart Saudi Aramco. Petroleum Minister, Murli Deora met his Kuwaiti counterpart Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al Sabah at the XII International Energy Forum. Kuwait said that it would like to discuss the opportunity further.

Source: The Times of India, New Delhi

For full report: <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/biz/india-business/India-offers-stakes-in-petrochemical-plants-to-Kuwait/articleshow/5745911.cms>

Morocco

27. Renault-Nissan Chennai plant to train Morocco staff

Wednesday, 24 March 2010

Mumbai: The Chennai plant of Renault-Nissan would be a key training centre for a new facility being commissioned in Morocco next year. According to Michel Gornet, Executive Vice President Renault, staff from the Morocco plant would be sent to Chennai to become master trainers following which they would head back to Morocco and carry out down the line training in the facility there.

In Morocco, Renault would be the lead manager in the alliance whereas Nissan takes over this responsibility in Chennai. Both the Morocco and Chennai plants went through their share of hiccups in 2009 due to the recession. However, things have improved since then and the partners are back on track with their projects in the two countries.

Source: The Hindu Business Line, Chennai

For full report: <http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/2010/03/25/stories/2010032550720200.htm>

Oman

28. Scope for investment in Oman: Ambassador

Monday, 22 March 2010

Kochi: There is much scope for investment in projects in Oman as well as India said Humaid Ali Al-Maani, the Ambassador of Sultanate of Oman to India. He was addressing a meeting of businessmen convened by the Kerala Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The medical and education sectors in Kerala have tremendous prospects for investment. Similarly, Oman offered good opportunities for investment in tourism and education.

Source: The Hindu, Chennai

For full report: <http://www.thehindu.com/2010/03/22/stories/2010032254841700.htm>

See also: <http://expressbuzz.com/Cities/Kochi/%E2%80%98scope-bright-for-india-oman-tie-up%E2%80%99/158099.html>

Qatar

29. Indian engineers forum inducts new committee

Tuesday, 23 March 2010

Doha: The Qatar chapter of the Institute of Engineers India held a ceremony marking induction of new committee members in the presence of Indian Ambassador Deepa Gopalan Wadhwa. The incoming honorary Chairman Animesh Sarkar pledged to continue the good work and render excellent professional services to the engineering community of Qatar in consistent to the objective of the parent body.

Source: The Peninsula Online, Doha

For full report:

http://www.thepeninsulaqatar.com/Display_news.asp?section=Local_News&subsection=Qatar+News&month=March2010&file=Local_News2010032332736.xml

United Arab Emirates

30. UAE blocks sheep, goat shipment from India

Wednesday, 3 March 2010

Dubai: The UAE has blocked an Indian shipment of 950 goats and sheep after a number of animals were found to be infected with foot and mouth disease. The owners of the shipment attempted to enter the country at night through Ras Al Khaimah but were prevented by the quarantine and customs authorities. Acting on the information provided by the veterinary officers in Kuwait, the UAE Ministry of Environment and Water immediately issued orders to push the shipment out of regional water. All other Gulf Cooperation Council countries were also informed about the shipment.

Source: The Hindu, Chennai

For full report: <http://beta.thehindu.com/news/international/article125330.ece>

Miscellaneous

31. Paravur synagogue to be restored

Tuesday, 16 March 2010

Paravur (Kerala): A dilapidated Jewish synagogue in North Paravur of Kerala, one of the oldest in India is set for restoration. 'Rs 0.63million will be spent to restore it' said K K Mohanan Pillai, the Director of Kerala State Department of Archaeology. North Paravur, a small town about 20 kilometres north of Kochi was one of the places where Cochin Jews settled. The Cochin Jews like other Jews in India never faced any anti-Semitism and were an integral part of the multi-cultural milieu.

The Paravur synagogue was built in 1615 CE and the services in the synagogue continued till 1988. Though the Paravur synagogue was declared a protected monument in 1996, the structure was not well maintained. The Jews started immigrating to Israel in 1949 after the state of Israel was formed and by 1954 most of them moved out of Kerala affecting the maintenance of the Jewish heritage structures. The restoration of Paravur synagogue is expected to be completed in September.

Source: The Hindu, Chennai

For full report: <http://www.thehindu.com/2010/03/16/stories/2010031658412200.htm>

32. Mumbai Bohras breathe new life into Iraq Shrine

Sunday, 21 March 2010

Kufa (Iraq): A sprinkling of Dawoodi Bohras stands out among the thousands of pilgrims paying obeisance at the Great Mosque of Kufa in Iraq. This small trading community from Mumbai has rebuilt the site at the peak of internal strife in Iraq. The shrine was neglected structure due to the apathy of Saddam Hussein before the Bohras started rebuilding it in 1988. The mosque marks the place where Imam Ali, whom Shiites consider the lawful successor of Prophet Mohammed, was killed in 661. Kufa is one of the five Iraqi cities of great importance to Shiites.

Source: The Times of India, New Delhi

For full report: <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/mumbai/Mumbai-Bohras-breathe-new-life-into-Iraq-shrine/articleshow/5707403.cms>

33. KV Tehran cries for help, waits for aid from Delhi

Monday, 22 March 2010

New Delhi: The Indian school in Tehran converted into a Kendriya Vidyalaya in 2004 is now fighting for survival. Running far below capacity and stretched for funds, KV Tehran is waiting for the Human Resource Ministry and Ministry of External Affairs to bail it out. Though sources indicate that the school may be given Rs 4 million, red tape is holding the grant.

In June 2004, the Indian Embassy took over the Indian Senior Secondary School set up by expatriate Indians with the help of the Gurudwara Samiti and handed over its reins to the

Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan. According to sources, this move was prompted by the tightening of norms for minority schools and the dwindling number of Indians in the country. With the Indian community finding it difficult to manage the popular school, the embassy stepped in and the Ambassador became the Chief Patron.

Source: The Indian Express, New Delhi

For full report: <http://www.indianexpress.com/news/kv-tehran-cries-for-help-waits-for-aid-from-delhi/593920/>

34. Indian movies in Egypt after 15 years

Wednesday, 31 March 2010

Chennai: The screening of Indian films in Egypt has been revived putting an end to a 15 year hiatus. *My Name is Khan* received a rousing reception in eight screens across Egypt paving way for more Indian films. 'We proposed the plan to screen Indian films in Egypt after Indian films were well received during the Cairo International Film Festival held over the years' said Gaurang Jalan, the proprietor of Gaurang Films who was instrumental in releasing Indian films in Egypt.

Source: The New Indian Express, Chennai

For full report: <http://expressbuzz.com/news/indian-movies-in-egypt-after-15-years/161149.html>

Note: One Crore = Ten million

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