



# **MEI INDIA WATCH**

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

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**No. 4**

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Compiled by

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## **Political Issues**

### **Iran**

#### **1. Iran sanctions push casts shadow on Manmohan-Obama meet**

Washington, DC Saturday, 10 April 2010

The American drive for sanctions against Iran dominated the Indian plans on the eve of the bilateral meeting between Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and President Barack Obama. The US has been trying to garner international support for tightening economic sanctions against Tehran over the nuclear issue. Although currently India is not a member of the United Nations Security Council, the U.S. was keen to enlist its support. An Indian official was quoted as saying: 'We don't think sanctions are needed or that they will solve the problem.'

The unnamed official observed: 'We have complied with whatever sanctions the UN imposed but only as part of a broader process of engagement with Iran.' The Iranians, he said, had repeatedly told India that they do not want nuclear weapons. 'Unfortunately others don't believe that. So the only way to resolve this is through the [work of the] International Atomic Energy Agency' rather than through coercive means. India's acceptance of Iran's invitation to participate in an international conference in Tehran slated for later this month was another red rag to Washington, which has quietly been discouraging other countries from attending.

*Source: The Hindu, Chennai*

For full report: <http://beta.thehindu.com/news/international/article393908.ece>

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## 2. India does not favour Iran sanctions

Washington, DC Wednesday, 14 April 2010

As the US is engaged in gathering support for sanctions against Iran, on 13 April Prime Minister Manmohan Singh told President Barrack Obama that while India did not favour Iran's nuclear weapon ambitions, sanctions would only hurt the poor. 'On the issue of sanctions... as far as we are concerned, we don't think sanctions really achieve their objective.' Prime Minister Singh made these observations at the conclusion of the Nuclear Security Summit, where Obama tried to win support for sanctions against Iran for its alleged pursuit of nuclear weapons. 'Very often the poor in the affected country suffer more...as far as the ruling establishment is concerned, they are not really affected by these sanctions in any meaningful way', the Prime Minister added.

Source: *The Times of India*, New Delhi

For full report: <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/India-does-not-favour-Iran-sanctions/articleshow/5801206.cms>

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## 3. BRIC, IBSA nations not keen on Iran's sanctions

New Delhi, Sunday, 18 April 2010

As the US and its western allies press ahead with efforts to impose tougher sanctions against Iran, meeting in Brasilia the leaders and officials from two major international groupings IBSA and BRIC took a view that new sanctions would not resolve the nuclear issue. On 15 April Prime Minister Manmohan Singh met with President of Brazil Lula da Silva and President of South Africa Jacob Zuma for the India-Brazil-South Africa (IBSA) summit. Then Singh met Lula and Presidents Dmitri Medvedev of Russia and Hu Jintao of China for the second Brazil-Russia-India-China (BRIC) summit.

On the sidelines, India's National Security Adviser, Shiv Shankar Menon met BRIC senior security officials, Nikolai Patrushev of Russia and Dai Binguo of China. Menon also met with his US counterpart James Jones, who provided a description of Washington's current approach to the Iran issue. At the conclusion of these meetings a senior Indian official said, 'All of us agreed that we don't think sanctions will help solve the current problems with Iran.' In addition, there was agreement that the central role of International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in settling Iranian nuclear issue had to be re-established. The BRIC nations agreed that Iran had the right to nuclear energy but that it also has an obligation to set at rest international concerns about the nature of its nuclear programme.

The IBSA communiqué said that three leaders 'reiterated the need for a peaceful and diplomatic solution of the issue.' Although President Barrack Obama had told Prime Minister Manmohan Singh that the proposed sanctions would not target the ordinary people of Iran, the Indian side is not convinced about this. Its willingness to question publicly, if not oppose economic sanctions on Iran, marks a slight shift in approach on the part of New Delhi. Earlier, Indian views on Iran would begin with a reiteration of its opposition to Tehran acquiring nuclear weapons before making the wider point that dialogue was essential. However, in the past few months, the Manmohan Singh government has highlighted that sanctions are not the answer.

Source: *The Hindu*, Chennai

For full report: <http://www.thehindu.com/2010/04/18/stories/2010041863681200.htm>

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#### **4. New Delhi supports Iran Conference on disarmament**

Tehran, Sunday, 18 April 2010

A two day conference on disarmament and non-proliferation that was held in Tehran on 17-18 April and has generated several ideas on a possible road map to achieve complete and time bound elimination atomic weapon stockpiles across the globe. India has welcomed Iran's initiative towards nuclear disarmament. 'We support all attempts, including the one by Iran that would lead to elimination of atomic weapons and the lowering of nuclear tensions', said Gaddam Dharmendra, India's representative to the Tehran Conference. Iran's representative at the IAEA, Ali-Asghar Soltanieh acknowledged the problem by saying 'We will have to negotiate with each other [India – Iran] to arrive at common ground, but this is very much possible as both countries share the common goal of eliminating nuclear weapons.' Representatives from more than 60 countries, including Russia and China participated in the conference.

Source: The Hindu, Chennai

For full report: <http://beta.thehindu.com/news/national/article402336.ece>

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#### **5. India's role crucial for regional stability, says EU team**

New Delhi Wednesday, 28 April 2010

An EU parliamentary delegation that visited India described it as the 'most crucial point' to the stability of the region and suggested that new Delhi would play a very important role in the formulation and execution of the Iran and Afghan-Pak policy being pursued by the EU. 'India is crucial point of stability in the region. India is the biggest and most populous democracy and has to play a bigger role in the stability and peace. In the context of Iran, EU could work and talk more with India to bring around Iran. We are cooperating with India closely on all such issues of global peace and security', said Lena Kolanska Bobinska, member of the delegation and MP from Poland.

Source: The Hindu, Chennai

For full report: <http://www.thehindu.com/2010/04/28/stories/2010042853530400.htm>

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## Israel

#### **6. Jews original target of Pune blast**

Mumbai, Friday, 9 April 2010

Maharashtra Home Minister R R Patil said that the investigators had narrowed down on the perpetrators of the German Bakery blast in Pune in February and claimed that Chabad House and the Jewish Red Temple synagogue in the city were original targets of the attackers and not the Bakery. In the past sources within the Maharashtra Anti-Terrorist Squad had indicated that the attack was handiwork of the Indian Mujahedeen. Patil added that like the 26 November 2008 attacks in Mumbai, the Pune blast also had Jews as its original target but was prevented by tight security at the orthodox Jewish centre.' The main target was the Chabad House and Jewish Red Temple synagogue, however, as security was tightened as these locations the terrorists could not achieve their objective' Patil told reporters.

Source: Indian Express, New Delhi

For full report: <http://www.indianexpress.com/news/jews-original-target-of-pune-blast-know-the/602092/>

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## Morocco

### 7. Morocco pledges support for India in UN Security Council

Washington, DC Tuesday, 13 April 2010

Prime Minister of Morocco Abbas El Fassi pledged support for India's candidature to the UN Security Council at a meeting with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on 12 April. The two Prime Ministers met on the sidelines of the Nuclear Security Summit held in Washington. Further, both countries agreed to increase economic cooperation. The Commerce Ministers of both the countries would soon meet in New Delhi for a joint commission meeting. Bilateral trade between India and Morocco is increasing every year and is said to have exceeded one billion last year. Morocco is one of India's most important suppliers of phosphate and recently signed an agreement with The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) to improve its solar and wind energy sectors.

Source: [Hindustan Times, New Delhi](#)

For full report: <http://www.hindustantimes.com/News-Feed/india/Morocco-supports-India-s-candidature-to-UNSC/Article1-530560.aspx>

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## Kuwait

### 8. Book traces Kuwait-India relations

New Delhi, Monday, 5 April 2010

*Destiny's Destination* a book by Indian author Saulat Ali Khan tracing Kuwaiti-Indian relations during the past 35 years was launched at the Kuwaiti embassy in New Delhi. The ceremony was attended by the Indian Minister of State for Tourism and Culture Affairs Sultan Ahmed. Kuwait Ambassador to India, Sami Al-Sulaimani told that the embassy was keen on presenting the book that illustrated Kuwaiti-Indian relations in the fields of politics, trade, society and culture. *Destiny's Destination* traces the journey of the author's life as a young man hailing from a small village in Uttar Pradesh who became a successful businessman and eminent personality among Indians in Kuwait.

Source: [Kuwait Times, Kuwait](#)

For full report: [http://www.kuwaittimes.net/read\\_news.php?newsid=MTMyNDI5Njc3Mg](http://www.kuwaittimes.net/read_news.php?newsid=MTMyNDI5Njc3Mg)

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## Saudi Arabia

### 9. Indian woman held in Saudi Arabia for husband's 'murder'

New Delhi, Sunday, 04 April 2010

An Indian doctor in Saudi Arabia had been in solitary confinement with her infant child for nearly 18 days pending investigations into her husband's suspected murder, after he allegedly converted to Islam. Her husband, also a doctor in Najran, died on 31 January. Suspicion that he was poisoned was raised a month later despite certification by a legal medical specialist under

the Health Ministry that the cause of death was ‘myocardial infection’ [heart attack]. On 1 March as the bereaved family was preparing to leave for India, the doctor was summoned to a local police station and told that her husband had embraced Islam before his death and for that reason she could not carry the body to India. A fortnight later, she was again made to report to the police and put in solitary confinement. ‘We are doing everything possible to help. But even engaging a lawyer to represent the case in faraway Najran is an expensive and difficult proposition’ said a senior MEA official.

**Source: Hindustan Times, New Delhi**

For full report: <http://www.hindustantimes.com/Indian-woman-held-in-Saudi-Arabia-for-husband-s-murder/H1-Article1-526839.aspx>

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### **Related report**

New Delhi, Monday, 19 April 2010

In his meeting with the Governor of Riyadh, Prince Salman Bin Abdul Aziz Minister of State for External Affairs Shashi Tharoor pleaded for an Indian doctor’s reprieve from Saudi law enforcement agencies. She was detained and kept in solitary confinement for allegedly ‘murdering’ her husband. Efforts are underway at Tharoor’s behest so that the doctor in question Dr. Shalini Chawla could be return to India.

**Source: Indian Express, New Delhi**

For full report: <http://www.indianexpress.com/news/Real-work-that-went-unnoticed/608156/>

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## **10. Prince Salman to begin four day India visit today [11 April 2010]**

Riyadh, Sunday, 11 April 2010

The Governor of Riyadh Prince Salman Bin Abdul Aziz was on a four day [April 11-15] visit to India. The Prince made the visit at the invitation of Vice President Hamid Ansari. ‘Prince Salman’s visit to India is extremely important both on account of his stature in the Saudi government and the fact that the visit is taking place so soon after Prime Minister Manmohan Singh’s recent visit to the kingdom’ said Indian Ambassador Talmiz Ahmed. The Prince met President Pratibha Patil at Rashtrapathi Bhavan and discussed important elements in Saudi-India relations. Prince Salman was conferred an honorary doctorate by Jamia Millia Islamia, one of India’s renowned universities. He was also discussed economic cooperation with business leaders in Mumbai.

**Source: Arab News**

For full report: <http://arabnews.com/saudi-arabia/article41671.ece>

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## **UAE**

### **11. Govt set to appeal UAE court verdict**

New Delhi, Tuesday, 6 April 2010

As the UAE has assured India of a fair trial to the 17 Indians sentenced to death by a lower court in Sharjah for murder, the Overseas Indian Ministry has engaged a law firm to file an appeal challenging the court’s verdict. Lawyers representing the Dubai-based Mohamed Salman Advocates and Legal Consultants who have been entrusted with the case have met the accused in Sharjah jail and discussed the details of the case. It is learnt that an Indian lawyer would appear on behalf of the convicted persons. Officials said that since the appeal would come up in a

regular court governed by criminal laws, the chances of commuting the death penalty would be bright.

Source: Indian Express, New Delhi

For full report: <http://www.indianexpress.com/news/govt-set-to-appeal-uae-court-verdict/600465/>

Additional link: <http://www.thehindu.com/2010/04/06/stories/2010040657192000.htm>

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## **12. Indians on death row in UAE allege torture**

Chandigarh, Tuesday, 20 April 2010

Seeking justice, 17 Indian youth on the death row in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) alleged that they have been framed in the murder case of a Pakistani national after being tortured. Representatives of a Punjab-based NGO, Lawyers for Human Rights International (LFHRI) who recently met the accused, concluded that they were tortured and were not being given proper legal aid. 'We had a two-hour meeting with 17 Indians and we came across a very sorry state of affairs...' said General Secretary Navkiran Singh, LFHRI. After the visit of LFHRI members to Sharjah, the kin of the Indian prisoners see a ray of hope. 'Earlier, we had lost all hope as we had not got any call from Taranjit for many months. But now, after their [LFHRI] intervention, we are getting a call from him every Sunday.' said Paramjit Singh, brother of one of the accused.

Source: The Times of India, New Delhi

For full report: <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Indians-on-death-row-in-UAE-allege-torture/articleshow/5836422.cms>

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## **Energy Issues**

### **Algeria**

## **13. India IOC plans 1<sup>st</sup> Azeri, Algerian oil deal-Sources**

New Delhi, Wednesday, 14 April 2010

The state run Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) is planning its first ever crude oil import deals with Algerian firm Sonatrach, as it aims to lift 15.4 percent more low sulphur oil in the current fiscal year. The terms of the deals for up to 10,000 barrels per day (bpd) each of Tunisia's Zarzaitine grade crude from Algeria's Sonatrach had been finalised but the agreements were yet to be signed.

The IOC, which normally buys the two grades through spot tenders, plans to import 150,000 bpd of low sulphur crude through annual term deals in the current fiscal year. India's top refiner annually imports crude for its ten refineries which have a combined capacity of 1.2 million bpd.

Source: Reuters India, New Delhi

For full report: <http://in.reuters.com/article/domesticNews/idINDEL00288320100414>

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## Egypt

### 14. **GSPC inks agreement with Egypt for oil and gas exploration**

Ahmadabad, Thursday, 8 April 2010

Gujarat State Petroleum Corporation (GSPC) has inked an agreement with the government of Egypt for oil and gas exploration. The Gujarat government promoted company, in partnership with private sector Adani Group, was allotted three blocks for oil and gas exploration. An agreement for commencing exploration activities was signed with one block while similar agreements for the remaining blocks would be finalised at a later stage. The GSPC already has acquired two blocks in Egypt apart from three awarded recently.

**Source: The Economic Times, New Delhi**

For full report: <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/news-by-industry/energy/oil-gas/GSPC-inks-agreement-with-Egypt-for-oil-and-gas-exploration/articleshow/5773884.cms>

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## Iran

### 15. **Five leading Indian firms under US scanner for Iran links**

New Delhi, Sunday, 25 April 2010

Five leading Indian oil firms have come under the American scanner for doing business with Iran's oil and gas sector and this could complicate the position of the Manmohan Singh which had expressed its opposition to sanctions against Iran. The United States Government Accountability Office (GAO) report that named five Indian companies as part of a list of 41 foreign firms engaged with Iran's Oil and Gas sector. The Indian companies are Indian Oil Corporation, Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC), ONGC Videsh (OVL), Oil India Limited and Petronet LNG. In addition, the U.K.-based Hinduja group is also listed for energy-related trading with Iran. A confirmatory questionnaire was sent to every company named in the GAO report but none of the Indian firms had replied so far.

According to the report, 'IOC, OVL, OIL and ONGC are engaged in the development of the Farzad B natural gas field in the Farsi block and South Pars assets with an estimated investment of US\$ 5 billion.' Reliance Industries was not a part of the list because it had not taken up any infrastructure projects. It was one of Iran's main suppliers of petrol and diesel till 2009, but backed out after US legislators called for an investigation into a US\$900 million US Export Import bank loan guarantee for one of its refineries. In the past India has not objected to the manner in which Washington targeted oil firms but this time around major public sector giants have come under American scrutiny for investing in Iran or selling it refined projects, Though the report does not pass judgment on any company, it notes the provisions of the Iran Sanctions Act, which allows the US to penalise companies from third countries that invest more than US\$20 million in the Iranian hydrocarbon sector.

**Source: The Hindu, Chennai**

For full report: <http://www.thehindu.com/2010/04/25/stories/2010042550880100.htm>

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**16. Reliance, others withdraw from Iran, but China replaces them**

Washington, DC Thursday, 29 April 2010

Under mounting global pressure especially from the US, several companies including India's Reliance have stopped selling gasoline to Iran, but the place has been quickly occupied by those from China. Several US lawmakers had raised questions over Reliance's business ties with Iran and urged the Export Import Bank of the US to rescind loan guarantees to it. 'India's Reliance has been a major supplier of gasoline sales to Iran. However, in January 2009, Reliance reportedly agreed to terminate gasoline sales to Iran once its current contractual obligations expire' said the latest report of Congressional Research Service (CRS). Apart from Reliance, the Swiss-based wholesalers have also terminated their gasoline supplies to Iran. These long time suppliers are being replaced by smaller Dubai-based and Chinese companies including Chinese firm ZhenHua Oil which provides with one third of Iranian gasoline imports.

Source: *The Economic Times*, New Delhi.

For full report: <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/news-by-industry/energy/oil--gas/Reliance-others-withdraw-from-Iran-but-China-replaces-them/articleshow/5872911.cms>

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## Kuwait

**17. Kuwait offered equity in Dahej, Paradip projects**

Cancun (Mexico), Thursday, 1 April 2010

India's Petroleum and Natural Gas Minister Murli Deora held a series of bilateral talks with countries like Kuwait, Mexico and Indonesia during the Energy Forum held in Mexico during 29-31 March. While seeking more oil from Kuwait, Deora offered Kuwait a stake in Oil and Natural Gas Corporation's (ONGC) Rs 124.40 billion petrochemical plant at Dahej in Gujarat and the proposed Indian Oil Corporation chemical unit at Paradip. In his interaction with his Kuwaiti counterpart Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah, Deora offered a stake in the mega petrochemical plants being built on the west and east coasts. The ONGC is keen to get an overseas major who could either bring technology or marketing support for its Dahej plant that would be built by February 2012.

Source: *The Hindu*, Chennai

For full report: <http://beta.thehindu.com/business/Industry/article347113.ece>

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## Military Issues

### Oman

**18. Oman places order for weapons from India**

New Delhi, Monday, 5 April 2010

Oman has become the first country in Middle East to place an order for guns from India. The INSAS gun from the ordnance factory board is undergoing trials for the Oman Army. This is not the first time that Oman is planning to procure defence equipment from India and the state-



owned Goa shipyard Ltd (GSL) has delivered three tugboats to Oman. ‘The Sultanate of Oman has expressed its keenness to buy more boats from GSL, however due to overflow of orders that has been put on hold for the time being’ said officials. The GSL had participated in the Doha exhibition last year and it received positive response especially from countries like Bahrain and the UAE. The GSL would be undergoing modernisation to give boost to their ship construction capability.

Source: *The Financial Express, New Delhi*

For full report: <http://www.financialexpress.com/news/Oman-places-order-for-weapons-from-India/599908/>

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### **19. INS Betwa deployed in Gulf of Aden**

New Delhi, Wednesday, 14 April 2010

The Navy has deployed INS Betwa with an armed helicopter and marine commando team for anti-piracy patrolling in the Gulf of Aden. This ship replaced INS Beas. Warships of several other countries are also deployed in the Gulf of Aden. On average, 16-18 warships are deployed there at any given time.

Source: *The Hindu, Chennai*

For full report: <http://www.thehindu.com/2010/04/14/stories/2010041456851500.htm>

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## **Economic Issues**

### **Bahrain**

### **20. Jet, Gulf Air in code share pact**

Mumbai, Friday, 2 April 2010

Jet Airways has entered into a code share agreement with Bahrain's national carrier Gulf Air to enhance network connectivity between India and Bahrain. The Jet Airways would place its flight code on all Gulf Air-operated flights between Bahrain and Mumbai, Delhi, Chennai, Kochi and Thiruvananthapuram, while Gulf Air would place its flight code on Jet Airways' daily services between Mumbai and Bahrain.

Source: *The Hindu, Chennai*

For full report: <http://www.thehindu.com/2010/04/02/stories/2010040254821700.htm>

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### **21. Khana Khazana to open 10 restaurants**

Ahmadabad, Wednesday, 28 April 2010

Chef Sanjeev Kapoor-led Khana Khazana said that it would open ten middle segment restaurants under the flagship brand – The Yellow Chilli, this year, including four in Bahrain. The company has aggressive expansion plans in the Middle East where it also has two high end dining restaurants one each in Dubai and Doha. ‘Within a span of next five years, we plan to open ten of

our middle segment restaurants and three of our high end outlets Khana Khazana there, besides a few in Kuwait' said Rajeev Matta, Chief Operating Officer of Khana Khazana

Source: the Economic Times, New Delhi.

For full report: <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/news-by-industry/services/hotels/-restaurants/Khana-Khazana-to-open-10-restraunts-including-four-in-Bahrain/articleshow/5868581.cms>

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## Israel

### 22. Indo-Israel FTA to boost trade ties

Kolkata, Monday, 12 April 2010

Speaking at the Bengal National Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Kolkata Israel's Ambassador to India Mark Sofer observed that the proposed Free trade Agreement (FTA) between India and Israel would boost trade and economic ties. He added that Israel would be the first country with which India will have a one-to-one FTA. After the FTA, the non-defence trade volume is expected to triple to US\$ 12 billion from the present level of four billion dollars. Further, the Ambassador said that trade between India and Israel was complementary in nature.

Source: Business Standard, New Delhi

For full report: <http://www.business-standard.com/india/news/indo-israel-fta-to-boost-trade-ties/90964/on>

Additional link:

The Economic Times, New Delhi <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/foreign-trade/Trade-pact-with-Israel-to-give-foothold-in-West-Asia/articleshow/5846664.cms>

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## Oman

### 23. JSPL to buy Oman's Shaded Iron

New Delhi, Friday, 30 April 2010

The Navin Jindal-owned Steel and Power (JSPL) is close to acquiring Oman-based Shaded Iron and Steel. The sponge iron maker has already signed an MOU with Shaded Iron and Steel a 1.6-million tonne gas-based factory that makes sponge iron used in steel-making owned by Abu Dhabi's Al Ghaith Holdings. The deal opens doors for JSPL into the Gulf region where steel capacity is limited by dearth of iron ore. Steel experts suggest that the asset is a prized catch for JSPL, which runs an integrated steel plant producing coal based sponge iron, steel and captive power at Raigarh in Chhattisgarh.

Source: The Economic Times, New Delhi

For full report: <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/news-by-industry/indl-goods/-svs/steel/JSPL-to-buy-Omans-Shaded-Iron/articleshow/5874654.cms>

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## Qatar

### 24. Qatar keen on investing in Indian power sector: envoy

Doha, Sunday, 4 April 2010

Having embarked on mutual investments and collaborations, Qatar has shown interest in investing in India's infrastructure, especially in the power sector. With infrastructure being accorded top priority and the country needing at least 1 trillion US\$ investments in that sector alone during the 12<sup>th</sup> five year plan period (2012-1017), a delegation from India would be touring Qatar as a part of their efforts to tap funds for this growing segment. At a meeting of Institute of Chartered Accountant of India (ICAI), Doha chapter, Indian Ambassador Deepa Gopalan Wadhwa was quoted saying 'There are Qatari interests in India's power sector and very soon we will be able to see (announcements).'

Source: Gulf Times, Doha

For full report:

[http://www.gulf-times.com/site/topics/article.asp?cu\\_no=2&item\\_no=352957&version=1&template\\_id=48&parent\\_id=28](http://www.gulf-times.com/site/topics/article.asp?cu_no=2&item_no=352957&version=1&template_id=48&parent_id=28)

### 25. India form more than half of Qatar Airways recruits: CEO

Bangalore, Monday, 12 April 2010

Indians accounted for more than half of the recruitments, including global positions, made by Qatar Airways. 'India has a vast reservoir of talent and we are keen on tapping it' said the CEO Akbar Al Baker. Outlining the Indian market for the airways, he said that the launch of its daily service to Bangalore was proving to be one of its most successful start-up routes. Qatar Airways currently operates 74 flights a week spread across 11 Indian cities. With regard to expansion he said: 'I am satisfied with the network here. We want to grow in India but without disrupting or undermining the national carrier. We want to work in partnership with the national carrier.'

Source: The Times of India, New Delhi

For full report: <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/biz/india-business/Indians-form-more-than-half-of-Qatar-Airways-recruits-CEO/articleshow/5788893.cms>

## Saudi Arabia

### 26. Thousands of jobs await Indians in Gulf: NRI industrialist

New Delhi, Sunday, 4 April 2010

The Gulf is on the verge of a boom and there would be thousands of jobs for skilled Indians, especially in the petrochemical sectors, observed Ravi Pillai, Managing Director of a Saudi Arabia-based Nalser S Al-Hajri Corporation. Billions of dollars are being invested in major projects in the Gulf, particularly Saudi Arabia and the UAE emirate of Abu Dhabi and nearly 300,000 new jobs would be created in the next five years. 'The Gulf is on the brink of another boom' said Pillai, citing new projects especially refinery and nuclear power projects. 'Skilled workers from India will have maximum opportunity to work in these projects.' According to

Pillai, the real estate sector is also changing for the better. Pillai, who is also head of R P Group of Industries, said that it was planning to invest Rs.5 billion in India's power sector.

Source: *The Economic Times*, New Delhi

For full report: <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/news-by-industry/jobs/Thousands-of-jobs-await-Indians-in-Gulf-NRI-industrialist/articleshow/5759556.cms>

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## **27. India sniffs opportunities in Saudi Arabia**

New Delhi, Saturday, 10 April 2010

The Saudi Arabia 2010 budget includes US\$69.3 billion for new and existing infrastructure projects in the areas of power generation, construction and transportation proving huge opportunities for India. A high level business delegation led by Prince Salman Bin Abdul Aziz, Riyadh's Emir at the invitation of Vice-President Hamid Ansari is a follow up after Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's visit to the kingdom recently. The projects cover a wide spectrum including education, health, security, social and municipal services, water, electronic commerce and scientific research. Ambassador of Saudi Arabia Faisal Trad said 'Both countries are very serious about further developing their strategic partnership after the signing in February of the historic Riyadh Declaration.'

Source: *The Financial Express*, New Delhi

For full report: <http://www.financialexpress.com/news/India-sniffs-opportunities-in-S-Arabia/602578/>

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## **28. Software exports to Saudi Arabia up**

New Delhi, Monday, 12 April 2010

India's software and service exports to Saudi Arabia registered a growth of 5.5 percent in 2009-10. While hosting the Governor of Riyadh, Prince Salman Bin Abdul Aziz at a meeting jointly organised by the ASSOCHAM, CII and FICCI, Sachin Pilot, Minister of State for Communications and Technology said that software and services exports had registered a growth of 17 percent in 2008-09 over the preceding year.

Source: *The Hindu Business Line*, Chennai

For full report: <http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/2010/04/13/stories/2010041351660700.htm>

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## **29. Make workers aware of their rights, Saudi Arabia tells India**

Washington, DC Friday, 23 April 2010

Amid reports of exploitation of Indian workers by unscrupulous agents and employers in Saudi Arabia, Riyadh asked New Delhi to increase the awareness among its workers about their rights and obligations before they arrive in Saudi Arabia for work. 'We urge India to raise the awareness of its workers before they leave the country for Saudi Arabia, to disseminate information to the workers about what are their obligations and rights' said the Saudi Labour Minister Abdulwahed K Al-Humaid at the first-ever meeting of the Labour and Employment Ministers of the G-20 countries in Washington. He said some workers were exploited because they did not know their rights and also blamed Indian agencies that hired these people for being party to the exploitations. He further said that his Ministry prints brochures in local languages and requests embassies to distribute among their people before they leave for Saudi Arabia.

Source: *The Hindu*, Chennai

For full report: <http://www.hindu.com/2010/04/23/stories/2010042362042200.htm>

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## UAE

### **30. Dubai eyes export opportunities in India**

Dubai, Sunday, 4 April 2010

According to economic experts and reports, India is expected to emerge as the third largest economy in the world by 2050 after China and the US. Capitalising on this growth, the Dubai Export Development Corporation (EDC) conducted a seminar through the Dubai Export Academy on Export Opportunities in India. More than 40 UAE companies attended the seminar along with Sanjay Verma, Consular General of India. Some of the speakers were A J Vidyasagar, CEO of the State Bank of India, Dubai branch and Navin Kapoor, MD of Expertise Unlimited. Indian entrepreneurs are widely investing in expanding their manufacturing and service sector capabilities.

Source: **Gulf News, Dubai**

For full report: <http://gulfnews.com/business/economy/dubai-eyes-export-opportunities-in-india-1.607480>

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### **31. India second largest biz partner of UAE**

Kochi, Wednesday, 14 April 2010

India was the second largest partner of the UAE after the US even during the economic downturn. Over 15,000 Indian companies are operating in the region out of which 400 are in the free zone. At a seminar on 'Business between India and UAE in the present economic scenario' organized by the Kerala Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Kochi a top official of the UAE's Hamriyah Free Zone Authority (HFZA) said 'there is historical relationship between UAE and India that you cannot deny... We have been dealing with each other for centuries now even during tough times.' Out of the 500 Small and Medium enterprises, 90 are Indian companies at the HFZA.

Source: **The Economic Times, New Delhi**

For full report: <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/foreign-trade/India-second-largest-biz-partner-of-UAE/articleshow/5804551.cms>

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### **32. Ultratech buys ETA Star Co of Dubai**

Mumbai, Friday, 30 April 2010

Ultratech cement, an arm of Aditya Birla Group of companies, has announced the acquisition of 51 percent stakes in the Dubai-based ETA Star Cement. While the cost of the acquisition was not disclosed, the company said that the enterprise value of the deal works out to around Rs 17 billion. 'The acquisition of ETA Star Cement marks an entry of the Aditya Birla Group Cement Business into the Middle-East. It is in line with our long-term strategy of expanding our global presence across businesses and is consistent with our vision of taking India to the world,' said Kumar Mangalam Birla, chairman, Aditya Birla Group. Star Cement, an associate company of the UAE conglomerate ETA Ascon State, has a total installed capacity of 38 million tonnes a year with a presence in growing markets such as Bahrain, Sudan and Bangladesh.

Source: **The Times of India, New Delhi**

For full report: <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/biz/india-business/UltraTech-Cement-buys-ETA-Star-Co-of-Dubai/articleshow/5875000.cms>

Additional Link: <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/news-by-industry/indl-goods/-/svs/cement/Ultratech-set-to-buy-Dubai-cement-firm-Report/articleshow/5866734.cms>

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### **33. Indian expat remittances rise despite slowdown**

Mumbai, Sunday, 18 April 2010

A survey conducted by the Reserve Bank of India has said that despite global financial meltdown the remittances by Indian expatriates rose by over one billion dollars to US\$27.51 billion during April-September 2009. The rise in remittances may be attributed to a number of factors, including depreciation of rupee and hike in interest rate ceilings in NRI deposits since September 2008. The Gulf region accounts for an average of 27 percent of total remittances inflows to India, while North America continues to be the most important source region of remittances [38 percent] to India.

Source: *Hindustan Times, New Delhi*

For full report: <http://www.hindustantimes.com/Indian-expat-remittances-rise-despite-slowdown/Article1-532931.aspx>

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## **Miscellaneous**

### **34. Jaipur Foot: India's gift to Iraq**

Baghdad, Friday, 2 April 2010

Jaipur Foot founder D R Mehta was camping in Baghdad since 17 March along with his volunteers of his *Bhagwan Mahavir Viklang Sahayata Samiti*. This has given scores of people a new lease of life. With the help of artificial limbs Mehta promised a thousand Iraqis the chance to walk again. 'Within the first week of camp, more than 300 Iraqis walked home on new limbs, as the process of fitting an amputee with a Jaipur Foot takes only a day.' said Mehta, which otherwise would take up to a year with other agencies. The *Samiti* volunteers have given succour to many people in the war ravaged countries – Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Lebanon etc.

Source: *The Times of India, New Delhi*

For full report: <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/5753258.cms>

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### **35. Mistaken for pirate, Indian fishermen shot off Oman coast**

Muscat, Thursday, 22 April 2010

In what appears to be a case of mistaken identity, crew from a passing foreign cargo ship off the coast of Oman fired upon a group of fishermen fearing they were pirates and killed one of them, injuring another. Raju Ambrose was declared 'dead on arrival' by doctors at the Sultan Qaboos Hospital in Salalah, Oman. Shots were fired without any warning or provocation from the ship at the group of nearly 75 fishermen who had set off from the Kerala coast in 25 boats.

Source: *Indian Express, New Delhi*

For full report: <http://www.indianexpress.com/news/mistaken-for-pirate-indian-fisherman-shot-off-oman-coast/609609/>

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**36. Gujarat plans to get Asiatic Cheetahs from Iran**

Gandhinagar, Sunday, 25 April 2010

Efforts are on to bring a few Asiatic tigers and re-introduce them in the forests of Gujarat. S K Nanda, Principal Secretary, Forests and Environment said that Iran was the only country where the Asiatic cheetahs are still found, but their numbers dwindled to less than a hundred there as well. He said efforts are on to save the animals from extinction are being made.

Source: *The Hindu*, Chennai

For full report: <http://www.thehindu.com/2010/04/25/stories/2010042559622000.htm>

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## Hajj

**37. 160,000 Indians for this Hajj**

Jeddah, Thursday, 1 April 2010

Saudi Minister of Hajj Fouad Al-Farsy and India Minister of State for External Affairs Shashi Tharoor signed an agreement regarding the Hajj pilgrimage. They also discussed the ongoing work in Mecca that would improve facilities for the pilgrims were discussed. Following this agreement Tharoor told reporters: 'Over 160,000 Indian pilgrims coming through the Hajj Committee of India (HCI) and private tour operators are expected to perform Hajj this year. A request for an additional has been forwarded by the Ministry of Hajj taking into account the large number of applicants.' He thanked the Kingdom for making elaborate arrangements for the annual pilgrimage.

Source: *Arab News*

For full report: <http://arabnews.com/saudiarabia/article37686.ece>

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**38. Hajj quota: Court admits plea for probe**

Kochi, Wednesday, 7 April 2010

A Division Bench of the Kerala High Court admitted a writ petition seeking a directive to the Union Government to constitute an impartial agency to investigate into alleged irregularities in the allotment of quota for the Hajj pilgrimage to private tour operators from 2004 to 2009. The Bench issued notice to E Ahamed, Union Minister of State for Railways, the Central and State governments and the Central and State Hajj Committees.

According to the petitioner, Khalid Mundappilly, Hajj had become a multi crore business for private tour operators. Private tour operators entered the scene in 2001 when they were allowed to fly 50 to 500 pilgrims. When the United Progressive Alliance government came to power in 2004, Ahamed was made Union Minister of State for External Affairs and was also in charge of Hajj pilgrimage. He started giving away contracts to a certain tour operator Al Hind, with whom he had 'close connections'; it was allotted 1,700 pilgrims, when the Ministry guidelines allowed only 500. The petitioner pointed out that while the Central Hajj Committee said that the External Affairs Ministry had dealt with the additional quota granted by the Saudi government last year and that it was allotted to the Hajj Committee. Thus, it created suspicion that the additional quota had not been distributed fairly, the petitioner contended.

Source: *The Hindu*, Chennai

For full report: <http://www.thehindu.com/2010/04/07/stories/2010040763270500.htm>

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Note: One Crore = Ten million

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As part of its editorial policy, the MEI@ND standardizes spelling and date formats to make the text uniformly accessible and stylistically consistent.

*The views expressed here are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views/positions of the MEI@ND.*

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