



# **MEI INDIA SPEAKS**

(Monthly Digest of Official Indian Statements on Middle East)

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**Compiled by**

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## **Bilateral Issues**

### **a. Iran**

#### **1. Official Visit of H.E. Manouchehr Mottaki, Foreign Minister of Iran to India, 13 November 2009**

H.E. Mr. Manouchehr Mottaki, Foreign Minister of Iran, will be on an official visit to India from November 16-17, 2009 at the invitation of the External Affairs Minister. His visit carries forward the sequence of regular high-level contacts between India and Iran. The visit will provide an opportunity for both sides to discuss issues of mutual interest and further strengthen the civilizational and historical ties between India and Iran.

*Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, 13 November 2009,*

<http://meaindia.nic.in/pressrelease/2009/11/13pr01.htm>

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#### **2. Visit of Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran to India, 16 November 2009**

Mr. Manouchehr Mottaki, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran is on a two day visit to India (November 16-17). During his visit he called on the Hon'ble Vice President and the Prime Minister. He met with External Affairs Minister and held delegation level talks covering a wide range of issues. The discussions continued over lunch hosted by the External

Affairs Minister. The Iranian Foreign Minister reiterated an invitation to Prime Minister from President Ahmadinejad to visit Iran

The two sides underlined the need for the early convening of the next session of the Joint Commission and discussed various projects including in the fields of oil and gas, power, surface transport and infrastructure projects like the Chabahar Port and the International North-South Corridor. It was agreed that an Indian Cultural Centre would be set up in Tehran and an Indian cultural week would be held in Tehran and Shiraz in 2010. Both sides also discussed trade facilitation mechanisms and the need for an early conclusion of a Bilateral Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement, an agreement for Avoidance of Double Taxation, as also discussions on a Preferential Trade Agreement. The two sides also took the opportunity for detailed exchange of views on important regional and international issues, including the threat of terrorism confronting the two countries.

*Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, 16 November 2009,*

<http://meaindia.nic.in/pressrelease/2009/11/16pr02.htm>

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### **3. Ban on Import of Indian Basmati Rice by Iran, 25 November 2009**

#### **QUESTION**

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

- (a) whether the import of Basmati rice from India was recently held up at Iranian ports, following analysis report by Iranian testing authorities certifying Indian rice cargo contained traces of toxic chemicals;
- (b) whether there has been a demand in Iranian Parliament for a probe followed by an unofficial ban on Indian Basmati imports;
- (c) whether a high-level Iranian delegation was expected to visit India to inspect Basmati processing units in India; and
- (d) whether India has since sorted out the issue with Iran and if so the details thereof?

#### **ANSWER**

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY

(JYOTIRADITYA M. SCINDIA)

a) & b) No, Sir. Government is not aware of any consignment of Indian rice being held up at Iranian ports due to contamination with toxic chemicals. It had been reported in the Iranian media that the Iranian Parliament would be examining reports alleging that there has been some

contamination detected in some Indian rice consignments to Iran. The Iranian Health Ministry has also been quoted as saying that all samples etc. tested by them have been proved to be satisfactory for consumption.

c) & d) An Iranian delegation had been invited to visit India at their earliest convenience to inspect the high standards of health and hygiene observed in the growing, processing and packaging of Indian rice exports to remove any misunderstanding in the future. All necessary information regarding the observance of the highest health and hygiene standards has been shared with the Iranian Ministry of Health which is the nodal authority for determining health and hygiene standards of food imports into Iran including rice.

*Source: Rajya Sabha, Unstarred Question no. 608 asked by B.K. Hariprasad, 25 November 2009*

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#### **4. Indo-Iran Power Project, 30 November 2009**

##### **QUESTION:**

Will the Minister of Power be pleased to state:-

- (a) whether Government is all set to build new strategic ties with gas-rich Iran;
- (b) if so, whether his Ministry, along with the State-owned NTPC and Power Grid Corporation of India Ltd., is working out the contours of another \$10 billion (Rs. 48,750 crore [1 crore=10 million])
- (c) deal with Iran;
- (d) whether his Ministry is preparing a plan to set up a 6000 MW gas-based power project in Iran and 1500 km transmission line to bring 5000 MW of power to India via Pakistan; and
- (e) if so, whether any final decision in this regard has been taken?

##### **ANSWER**

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF POWER

(BHARATSINH SOLANKI)

(a) to (c) : Preliminary discussions to set-up a 6000 MW gas based power project by NTPC Ltd., in Iran and evacuation of power by Power Grid Corporation of India Ltd. (PGCIL) subject to its viability were held in the Ministry of Power recently. The proposal is at the conceptual stage only.

(d): No final decision has been taken in this regard.

*Source: Rajya Sabha, Unstarred Question no. 1164 asked by D. Raja and ND Mabel Rebello, 30 November 2009*

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### **5. Basmati Export to Iran, 30 November 2009**

#### **QUESTION:**

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

- (a) whether a shipment of basmati rice from India was recently held up at Iranian port of Bandar Abbas due to the rice cargo being contaminated with traces of toxic chemicals;
- (b) whether Iran has imposed ban on importing Indian basmati rice; and
- (c) if so, the reaction of the Indian Government in this regard?

#### **ANSWER**

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY  
(JYOTIRADITYA M. SCINDIA)

- (a) No, Madam. The Government is not aware of any consignment of Indian rice being held up at Iranian port of Bandar Abbas due to contamination with toxic chemicals.
- (b-c) No, Madam. Iran has not imposed ban on Indian basmati rice imports.

*Source: Lok Sabha, Unstarred Question no. 1612 asked by R. Dhruvanarayana, 30 November 2009*

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## **b. Iraq**

### **6. Bids for Oil and Natural Gas in Iraq, 26 November 2009**

#### **QUESTION**

Will the Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Government propose to explore the possibility of bidding for gas and oil blocks in Iraq;
- (b) if so, whether any talks have been held with the oil companies in Iraq to bid jointly for the blocks in Iraq;
- (c) if so, the result of the talks held and the names and numbers of blocks agree upon to be explored and the quantity of oil and gas expected to be achieved as a result thereof; and
- (d) the terms of the agreement entered into with the oil companies in Iraq, if any?

**ANSWER**

MINISTER OF THE STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM & NATURAL GAS  
(JITIN PRASADA)

(a) & (b): ONGC Videsh Limited (OVL), a subsidiary of Oil & Natural Gas Corporation Limited (ONGC) is looking into the possibility of bidding for oil and gas fields in Iraq. Preliminary discussions are being held with qualified oil companies for joint bidding in Iraq. Oil India Limited (OIL) is also exploring the possibility of participation in exploration and production in Iraq.

(c) & (d): Not applicable in view of (a) and (b) above.

*Source: Lok Sabha, Unstarred Question no. 1227 asked by Vilas Baburao Muttemwar, 26 November 2009*

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**c. Oman****7. Indo-Oman Gas Pipeline, 26 November 2009****QUESTION**

Will the Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas be pleased to state:-

- (a) whether India and Oman are still pursuing the possibility of an under-the-sea pipeline that could cater energy requirements of the country in a big way;
- (b) if so, the status thereof;
- (c) whether as per the previous study, the aforesaid pipeline is very costly;
- (d) if so, the details thereof; and
- (e) the steps taken to overcome the impediments in this regard?

**ANSWER**

MINISTER OF THE STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM & NATURAL GAS  
(Murli Deora)

(a) to (e): A statement is laid on the table of the House.

STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PARTS (a) TO (e) OF THE LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO. 112 BY SHRIMATI SUSHILA SAROJ AND GAJANAN D. BABAR, MPS TO BE ANSWERED ON 26TH NOVEMBER, 2009 REGARDING INDO-OMAN GAS PIPELINE

(a) to (e): An Agreement on Principal Terms for supply of 56.6 million standard cubic meter per day (mmscmd) natural gas through pipeline from Oman to India was signed between the Government of Oman and the Government of India in 1994. Pursuant to the above, GAIL and Oman Oil Company jointly carried out feasibility study of the Oman-India Deepwater Gas Pipeline. However, the Project could not move ahead due to, inter alia, the technical feasibility of the Project not being established and inadequate gas reserves for the Project.

In recent years, there have been significant technological advancements in the field of Deep Sea Gas transportation technology. Accordingly, for the last few years, interest has been revived in deep sea gas pipeline route from Middle-East to India. Gas supplies from several gas rich countries of Middle East through Gas Gathering pipeline with Hub in Oman (or its proximity) have been proposed, so as to supply gas to Indian Coast through the said Deep Sea Pipeline. GAIL (India) Ltd. has entered into a Principles of Cooperation in the month of July 2009 for developing the pipeline Project. As such, the proposal is at its initial stage.

*Source: Lok Sabha, Starred Question no. 112 asked by Smt. Sushila Saroj and Babar Gajanan Dharmshi, 26 November 2009*

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## Specific Issues

### a. Goldstone Report

#### **8. Statement by B.K. Hariprasad, Member of Parliament and Member of the Indian Delegation, on the Report of the Human Rights Council, at the 64th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, November 04, 2009**

Mr. President,

India condemns in the strongest possible terms the violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law committed during the Gaza conflict in December 2008-January 2009.

We are convinced that the unqualified adherence by all the concerned parties to the relevant instruments of international humanitarian law and human rights law is imperative, and further that any refusal by the concerned parties to do so should rightly receive the strongest possible opprobrium of the international community.

Mr. President,

We note that the “Goldstone Report” has been discussed by the UN system a number of times prior to our meeting today. This Report which was prepared under the express mandate of

the President of the Human Rights Council has been discussed at the Council in a special session in the middle of last month. Let us, therefore, be clear that what we are discussing is the report of the Human Rights Council at its 12<sup>th</sup> special session which was held in Geneva last month.

While participating in the Special Session, we had noted that the Fact Finding Mission had produced a comprehensive report that merits careful consideration. It had documented violations of human rights and international humanitarian law by all the sides involved. This is a matter of serious concern. We also pointed out that it was important not to lose sight of the weaknesses of the Report, including the fact that the Report itself admits that its findings do not necessarily reach the standard of proof applicable in criminal trials and that the Mission should have addressed its recommendations to the Council and not to other institutions in the UN and multilateral system.

The Report was also among the major issues discussed by the Security Council on 14 October. We had carefully watched this discussion in the Security Council as well as the events which led to its convening and followed it up with a serious analysis of the developments that have since unfolded.

Mr. President,

India's deep association with, and continuing commitment to, Palestine is rooted in our modern history that goes back to our struggle for independence. We believe that the solution to the Palestine issue should be based on the relevant UN Resolutions, the Arab Peace Plan and the Quartet Roadmap resulting in a sovereign, independent, viable and united State of Palestine living within secure and recognized borders, side by side at peace with Israel.

India will continue to do all within its capacities to assist Palestine in its endeavours in capacity and institution-building, as exemplified, among other things, by the recent enhancement in our contribution to UNRWA.

Mr. President,

The continuance of an atmosphere of distrust and refusal to talk is fast becoming a major obstacle to peace and security in the West Asia region. Terrorism and an escalating humanitarian crisis are adding obstacles to any resumption of the dialogue process. We are convinced that all the concerned parties involved in the Gaza conflict nearly a year back need to introspect and take firm action against those responsible for violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law in a credible and speedy manner as has been recommended by the Goldstone Report. The international community, especially the countries in the region must play a positive role in creating an enabling atmosphere for such investigations and follow-up actions.

In conclusion, Mr. President, I wish to emphasize that while we welcome the various efforts at documenting the injustices and atrocities committed during the Gaza conflict,

we have reservations in making an unqualified endorsement of the various recommendations as well as of some of the procedures adopted by the Goldstone Report, including on involvement of the International Criminal Court and that of the Security Council.

Thank you.

(Mr B.K. Hariprasad is a Member of Parliament from Karnataka representing the Congress Party in Rajya Sabha)

*Source: Permanent Mission of India to UN, 4 November 2009, <http://www.un.int/india/2009/ind1638.pdf>*

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### **9. Endorsing Goldstone Report, 25 November 2009**

#### **QUESTION**

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

- (a) whether India had expressed its reservations over endorsing the findings and recommendations of the Goldstone Report on Israel at the United Nations General Assembly recently;
- (b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefore;
- (c) whether there has been any change in India's stand on Israel issue; and
- (d) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefore?

#### **ANSWER**

MINISTER OF THE STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (DR. SHASHI THAROOR)

(a) & (b) India voted in favour of the relevant resolution at the United Nations General Assembly, recently. However, after the voting, we made an Explanation of Vote, because we did not want our support for the resolution to be construed as our endorsement of the referrals to the United Nations Security Council, and the International Criminal Court, recommended in the Goldstone Report.

(c) No.

(d) Does not arise.

*Source: Lok Sabha, Unstarred Question no. 1131 asked by P. Karunakaran, 25 November 2009*

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## **b. Hajj**

### **10. Hajj pilgrimage 2009, 9 November 2009**

#### QUESTION

Will the Minister of External Affairs be pleased to state:

- (a) the existing laws governing grant of permission to Indians going on Hajj pilgrimage;
- (b) whether the applications received for Hajj Pilgrimage exceeded the prescribed quota during 2009;
- (c) if so, the details thereof;
- (d) whether the Government proposes to increase the quota of Hajj pilgrimage during 2010; and
- (e) if so, the details thereof?

ANSWER: THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (S. M. KRISHNA)

(a) In accordance with the Hajj Agreement signed with the Government of Saudi Arabia, the Hajj quota is allotted between the Hajj Committee of India (HCOI) and the Private Tour Operators (PTOs). Subsequently, HCOI allocates this quota among various States on the basis of their percentage of Muslim population as per 2001 census. HCOI then invites applications from the intending pilgrims; thereafter, the selection is made on a random basis through computerized qurrah (lots). Quota can be availed under this category once in five years.

PTOs are registered by the Ministry of External Affairs to ensure transparency and competitiveness. Quota is allotted to them as per prescribed criteria and policy which is widely publicized through the media and websites.

(b) Yes, sir.

(c) The total Hajj quota allotted by Saudi Government for Hajj - 2009 was 1,67,991, out of which 1,20,586 was for the pilgrims travelling through Hajj Committee of India and remaining 47,405 was distributed among Private Tour Operators. Hajj Committee of India received 3, 57,338 applications out of which 1, 20,127 pilgrims proceeded through Hajj Committee of India. Since the process for Hajj-2009 is still underway, the actual number of pilgrims who performed Hajj during this year through Private Tour Operators cannot be provided.

(d) & (e) Quota for the next year will be decided on the basis of the Hajj Agreement to be signed between the Indian & Saudi Governments. Therefore, Hajj quota for 2010 would depend on the decision of the Saudi Government. However, Government makes all efforts to secure additional quota so that the aspirations of more and more Muslims to perform Hajj could be fulfilled.

*Source: Lok Sabha, Starred Question no. 300 asked by Lal Chand Kataria, 9 November 2009*

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### **11. Indian Hajj Pilgrims, 25 November 2009**

#### **QUESTION**

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

- (a) the total number of Indian Hajj Pilgrims during the last three years, year-wise;
- (b) the details of the facilities being provided by the Central Government to Hajjis;
- (c) whether as a result of Saudi Arabian Government's decision for having a compulsory international passport during Hajj there will be a drastic reduction in the number of Indian Pilgrims going for Hajj;
- (d) if so, the details thereof; and
- (e) the measures taken by the Government in this regard

#### **ANSWER**

MINISTER OF THE STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (DR. SHASHI THAROOR)

- (a) The total number of Hajj pilgrims who proceeded on Hajj during last three years through Hajj Committee of India is as under:

2006-II	2007	2008
155,723	157,415	166,993

- (b) The Government of India makes arrangements to facilitate the transportation of the pilgrims going to Saudi Arabia through the Hajj Committee of India and facilitates provision of accommodation and other logistical support for them. For efficient management and supervision of Hajj arrangements, a large contingent of seasonal local staff, supervisors, data entry operators, drivers and messengers are appointed by the Consulate General of India, Jeddah. In addition, Doctors, Nurses and other Para-medical staff, Coordinators, Assistant Hajj Officers, Hajj Assistants and KhadimulHujjaj are sent from India on Short-term deputation to Saudi Arabia. A hospital in Mecca and Branch offices –cum- dispensaries in Mecca and Medina are set up for Hajj pilgrims. Medicines provided at these dispensaries and hospitals are supplied from India and also procured locally. The Government is also making arrangements for providing polio, meningitis and influenza vaccinations for the pilgrims. The Hajj Committee of India is providing to the pilgrims information regarding confirmation of their seats, travel documents,

transportation, accommodation, release of foreign exchange, embarkation points and departure dates etc. The Government has taken a number of decisions to streamline the functioning of Private Tour Operators so that they provide proper services and facilities for the pilgrims. For Hajj-2009, two embarkation points, namely, Mangalore and Ranchi have been added to the already existing 17 embarkation points spread across the country.

(c) No.

(d) & (e) Does not arise.

*Source: Lok Sabha, Unstarred Question no. 1125 asked by Milind Murli Deora, 25 November 2009*

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## **12. Reduction of Personal expanses of Hajj Pilgrims, 25 November 2009**

### **QUESTION**

Unstarred Question no. 947 asked by in Lok Sabha on, Answered on 25 November 2009.

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

- (a) whether the personal expenses of Hajj Pilgrims granted by the Government have been reduced;
- (b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefore; and
- (c) the steps taken by the Government to meet the situation arising out of huge number of applications being received for Hajj pilgrims?

### **ANSWER**

MINISTER OF THE STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (DR. SHASHI THAROOR)

(a) & (b) Expenditure on Hajj depends on extraneous factors like rental of accommodation, exchange rate of foreign currency, excess baggage carried by the pilgrims and other miscellaneous expenses. This year, the Government has taken a decision to increase the pilgrims' share of airfare from Rs. 12000/- to Rs. 16000/-.

(c) The pilgrims are selected through a transparent computerized qurrah (lots) since the number of applications is significantly higher than the Hajj quota allotted to India. The Hajj quota is allotted by the Saudi Government on the basis of the size of the Muslim population of each country. Requests to increase the number of places available to Indian pilgrims have been made to Saudi authorities each year, and some additional seats have been provided.

*Source: Lok Sabha, Unstarred Question no. 947 asked by Shailendra Kumar and Mahesh Joshi, 25 November 2009*

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### **c. Palestinian Refugees**

#### **13. Statement by Khagen Das, Member of Parliament and Member of the Indian Delegation, on the UN Relief and works agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East at the 64th Session of the United Nations General Assembly on November 03, 2009**

Mr. Chairman,

At the outset, please allow me to express appreciation for the work of the Commissioner General and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). We also thank the UNRWA Advisory Committee and the members of the working group on the Financing of UNRWA, for their efforts in support of this Agency. We felicitate UNRWA on the occasion of the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its establishment. UNRWA's work in providing humanitarian assistance, including education, health care and social services is highly commendable.

India has consistently supported these efforts. We reiterate our appreciation for the difficult but essential service that UNRWA has rendered over the years, making assistance of the Palestinian refugees its highest priority.

Mr. Chairman,

The report, and other reports of the UN Secretary-General under this agenda item, clearly illustrate the severe challenges UNRWA continues to face. The Agency's budgetary shortfall continues to grow and it is finding difficult to maintain the existing level of services. This paucity of funds is paralleled by an increase in the demands upon the Agency for assistance and support, in particular in Gaza. We are concerned that the global financial crisis has adversely impacted UNRWA's operations.

These funding challenges exacerbate existing pressures of caring for refugees in overcrowded camps leading inhuman lives that are in urgent need of up-gradation. Such challenges cannot be addressed by a reduced capacity to help. There is an urgent need for greater international effort to ease UNRWA's fiscal burden.

Against this backdrop, India made a special contribution of US \$ One million in January 2009 in response to the Gaza flash appeal made by UNRWA for extending assistance to Palestinian civilians.

On the occasion of the 60th anniversary of UNRWA and given the financial constraints faced by the Agency, India has made a commitment to increase its contribution to the Agency to US \$ One million this year. These are in addition to our financial assistance packages to the Palestinians National Authority and other humanitarian assistance efforts for the well-being of the Palestinian people.

Mr. Chairman,

We share Commissioner General's assessment that an open access regime and greater freedoms for Palestinians are essential for creating an atmosphere in which the forces of compromise, moderation and tolerance are encouraged. The insecurity bred by extreme levels of poverty among the Palestinian people in the Occupied Territories is heightened by the lack of definitive progress in the peace process.

This leads us to the larger point: the only lasting solution to the problem of the Palestinian refugees is a just, lasting and comprehensive solution to the long-standing conflict in the Middle East. We believe that the solution to the Palestine issue should be based on the relevant UN Resolutions, the Arab Peace Plan and the Quartet Roadmap resulting in a sovereign, independent, viable and united State of Palestine living within secure and recognized borders, side by side at peace with Israel.

Till the day when a mutually-acceptable peace is in position, it is incumbent upon all of us to support UNRWA, as the primary source of humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian refugees. For this reason, we endorse efforts to support UNRWA by expanding its capacity to render assistance. India will, of course, continue to do all within its capacities to assist Palestine in its endeavours in capacity and institution-building.

We salute the struggling people of Palestine. We express our solidarity with the Palestinian people.

Thank you Mr. Chairman

(Khagen Das is a member of the 14th Lok Sabha of India. He represents the Tripura West constituency of Tripura and is a member of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI (M)) political party.)

*Source: Permanent Mission of India to UN, 3 November 2009, <http://www.un.int/india/2009/ind1636.pdf>*

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## Multilateral Issues

### a. Iran and IAEA

#### 14. Interview of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh by Ms. E.G. Weymouth, Editor-at-Large and Senior Diplomatic Correspondent of Newsweek, USA

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Interviewer: Interesting! A lot of people in the US worry very much, and it is a subject of great talk, about Iran getting a nuclear weapon? I know that India has a much better relationship with Iran than we do. Are you concerned? I know another undeclared site was just found yesterday.

Prime Minister: I had yesterday the Iranian Foreign Minister with me.

Interviewer: In Delhi?

Prime Minister: Yes.

Interviewer: How exciting!

Prime Minister: He was in Delhi yesterday.

Interviewer: Ah! For a change!

Prime Minister: We did discuss the nuclear question. Let me say the message that he left with me was that they feel encouraged by the messages they are receiving from the Obama Administration. And I see a glimmer of hope in what the Iranian Minister told me yesterday.

Interviewer: Well, I guess so. It depends how you look on it. It depends what your aim is. Is your aim to stop Iran from getting a nuclear weapon or not?

Prime Minister: Let me say that we have taken a consistent position. Iran is a signatory to the NPT. It must have all the privileges that go with being a member of the NPT like peaceful uses of nuclear energy. It has also all the obligations that go with their membership of the NPT. Therefore, I think nuclear weapon is not an option which Iran is entitled to under its membership of the NPT.

Interviewer: You have much more information than I do, but it looks to all observers from the outside - including the IAEA which just found another undeclared site yesterday - it certainly looks - and appears even from the IAEA report - as if they are pursuing a nuclear weapons programme.

Prime Minister: I had the pleasure of the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency visiting us a few weeks ago. And he was not so sure that Iran is definitely working towards a nuclear weapon.

Interviewer: It is interesting. The report that they issued yesterday - I do not know if you saw it, I could not sleep so I saw it in the middle of the night - was very critical, the IAEA report.

Prime Minister: I have not seen that.

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*Source: Prime Minister's Office, New Delhi [http://pmindia.nic.in/int\\_Weymouth.htm](http://pmindia.nic.in/int_Weymouth.htm)*

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### **15. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's Address at the Council for Foreign Relations at Washington D.C. , 23 November 2009**

Well, as far as Iran's nuclear weapon ambitions are concerned, I have stated it unambiguously on several occasions that we do not support the nuclear weapon ambitions of Iran. Iran is a signatory to the NPT. As such, it has all the rights that got with this membership of the NPT, that is, use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.

At the same time, it has obligations that go with its membership, and this rules out the nuclear weapon part. So there is no ambiguity in our position. They're quite clear in our thinking that Iran should not go the nuclear weapon path. That is inconsistent with its obligation as a member of the NPT.

Now, as regards the sanctions question, let me say that if the Security Council, in its wisdom, passes any resolution, we have, in the past, abided by the decisions of the Security Council. And as I see President Obama's approach has opened up a new pathway of engagement without precondition, our hope is that it will yield results.

A few days before I left New Delhi, I had the privilege of meeting the Iranian foreign minister, who is an old student who studied in our country for many years. He was there. And while talking, he mentioned explicitly to me that Iran is encouraged by the messages it is receiving from the new Obama administration and that he was hopeful that they would lead to constructive, productive results.

I hope that part, if it does yield productive results, that would be for the good of humanity at large.

*Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, 23 November 2009, <http://meaindia.nic.in/speech/2009/11/23ss01.htm>*

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## **16. India's Explanation of Vote at IAEA, Vienna**

The Board of Governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) met on November 26-27, 2009 in Vienna. Reproduced below is the text of the Explanation of Vote by India on the resolution on the issue of implementation of safeguards in the Islamic Republic of Iran, which was adopted by the Board on November 27, 2009.

### Explanation of Vote

The Indian delegation has taken careful note of the report of the DG on Implementation of the NPT Safeguards Agreement and Relevant Provisions of Security Council Resolutions in the Islamic Republic of Iran. In his Report the DG has noted that while the Agency has continued to verify the non-diversion of declared nuclear material in Iran, there has however, been no movement on remaining issues of concern which need to be clarified for the Agency to verify the exclusively peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear programme.

The DG concluded that 'Iran's failure to notify the Agency of the existence of this facility until September 2009, rather than as soon as the decision to construct it or to authorize construction was taken, was inconsistent with its obligations under the Subsidiary Arrangements to its Safeguards Agreement and that Iran's late declaration of the new facility reduces confidence in the absence of other nuclear facilities under construction in Iran which have not been declared to the Agency.'

India has consistently supported the right of all states to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy consistent with the respective obligations that they have undertaken. In Iran's case which is a signatory to the NPT, it has all the rights and obligations that go with its membership of the NPT pertaining to the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. We also underline the importance of the full and effective implementation of all safeguards obligations under taken by member states of the IAEA.

Our support for the resolution is based on the key points contained in the Report of the DG. During previous Board meetings we had underlined the critical importance of continued cooperation and dialogue between the Agency and Iran. The Agency's safeguards system is the bedrock of the international community's confidence that peaceful uses of nuclear energy and non-proliferation objectives can be pursued in a balanced manner. The integrity of this system should be preserved.

India has considered the role of the DG has having a vital bearing on the consideration of all issues by the Board of Governors. The conclusions he has drawn in his report are therefore difficult to ignore.

In recent months we were encouraged by the new pathways of engagement that had opened up with Iran, including the recent meetings in Geneva and Vienna which gave rise to hopes of



constructive and productive results. As such we do not believe that the adoption of this resolution should divert the parties away from dialogue. This resolution cannot be the basis of a renewed punitive approach or new sanctions. In fact, the coming weeks should be used by all concerned to expand the diplomatic space to satisfactorily address all outstanding issues. India firmly supports keeping the door open for dialogue and avoidance of confrontation.

*Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, 27 November 2009, <http://meaindia.nic.in/pressrelease/2009/11/27pr02.htm>*

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## **b. Organization of Islamic Conference**

### **17. Resolution Passed by OIC, 26 November 2009**

#### **QUESTION:**

- (a) whether Government is cognizant of the recent resolution passed by the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC);
- (b) whether it is fact that the resolution reflects an organisation's stand on Jammu and Kashmir;
- (c) the details thereof;
- (d) whether Government has taken up the issue with the OIC and its members bilaterally; and
- (e) if so, the details of the responses?

#### **ANSWER**

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

(DR. SHASHI THAROOR)

(a) Yes.

(b) & (c) The Hon'ble member is probably referring to the recent resolution passed by OIC in their Final Communiqué of the Annual Coordination Meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the OIC Member States held in New York on September 25, 2009 on the sidelines of 64th session of UN General Assembly. It reflects their overtly one sided and India-adverse position on the issue of Jammu and Kashmir.

(d) & (e) Yes. The matter is invariably raised at bilateral level and in meetings with group of OIC member States.

The Government of India has issued a strong rebuttal in response to the OIC resolution stating that "It is regrettable that the OIC has commented on India's internal affairs. We condemn and reject this. Inherent in OIC's statements and actions on the issue of Jammu and Kashmir is a

complete inability to understand India's position. Jammu and Kashmir is an integral part of India and it is our firm position that the OIC has no *locus standi* in matters concerning India's internal affairs.

*Source: Rajya Sabha, Unstarred Question no. 785 asked by Santosh Bagrodia and O. T. Lepcha, 26 November 2009*

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## Miscellaneous

### 18. NACIL Flights to Gulf Region, 19 November 2009

#### QUESTION

Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:-

- (a) whether the National Aviation Company of India Ltd. (NACIL) has decided to stop the operation of IC coded flights from Kerala to Gulf Countries;
- (b) if so, the reasons therefore;
- (c) whether the NACIL had already withdrawn any flights from the Gulf countries to India during the last one year; and
- (d) if so, the reasons therefore?

#### ANSWER

MINISTER OF THE STATE (INDEPENDENT CHARGE) IN THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (PRAFUL PATEL)

(a) and (b): Yes, Sir. NACIL has decided to rationalise IC coded services and IX coded services (Air India Express) on Kerala-Gulf routes by withdrawing the IC coded services and substituting these with IX coded services as the revenue earned on IC coded services on these routes have not been adequate even to cover the cash cost of operations, while, the low cost flights operated under IX code have given operating surpluses. This is aimed at improving the overall profitability of NACIL. However, the restructuring would result in an increase in the seats offered by NACIL on the Kerala-Gulf routes from 26100 seats per week in summer 2009 schedule to 26400 seats per week.

(c) and (d): Yes, Sir. In order to reduce the losses and to improve profitability of NACIL's operations, several similar changes have been implemented to the schedule IC/AI coded services on the India-Gulf routes in order to cut back loss making routes and enhance the profitable ones. However, NACIL offered more seats now although under a single class configuration.

*Source: Lok Sabha, Unstarred Question no. 86 asked by M.B. Rajesh, 19 November 2009*

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**19. Address of the Hon'ble Vice President of India M. Hamid Ansari at the Conference titled "Emerging China: Prospects for Partnership in Asia" organized by ICWA and AAS at Sapru House (New Delhi) on 21 November 2009**

... A glance at the Asian map shows that over a wide arc extending from West Asia, through Central Asia, to South and South East Asia to East Asia, Indian and Chinese interests intersect... Partnership in Asia has primarily taken four forms. The first is one of Asian regionalism. Asia has been primarily reduced to the total of its constituent sub-regions like GCC, SAARC, SCO, ASEAN, BIMSTEC and the MGC or the Mekong Ganga Cooperation framework. The second means of partnership has been through inter-regional dialogue forums like Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) and APEC. The third framework is one of global and multilateral organizations. These include the UN and its specialized bodies, the IMF and World Bank, WTO and WIPO, Asian Development Bank etc. There also exist thematic organizations such as the G-20, Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) and the League of Arab States. The fourth framework is that of bilateral relations between countries of Asia.

*Source: Office of the Vice President of India, New Delhi, 21 November 2009,*

<http://vicepresidentofindia.nic.in/content.asp?id=247>

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**20. Difference in Airfares from Gulf Countries to India, 24 November 2009**

**QUESTION:**

Will the Minister of Civil Aviation be pleased to state:-

- (a) whether there is a vast difference in the fares of air travel from the Gulf countries to various cities in India and in Kerala;
- (b) the basis on which the airfares are worked out; and
- (c) what are the reasons for the difference in the fares?

**ANSWER**

MINISTER OF STATE (INDEPENDENT CHARGE) OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION

(PRAFUL PATEL)

(a) to (c): The Government does not regulate airline fares. It is for the airlines themselves to decide fares as per their revenue management and competition with the other airlines operating

on a particular route and having regard to all relevant factors including their cost of operations, characteristics and level of service etc.

*Source: Rajya Sabha, Unstarred Question no. 448 asked by P. Rajeeve, 24 November 2009*

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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 Website of Rajya Sabha [www.rajyasabha.nic.in](http://www.rajyasabha.nic.in) and Lok Sabha [www.loksabha.nic.in](http://www.loksabha.nic.in)**

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