



MEI INDIA SPEAKS

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Compiled by
Anjani Kumar Singh

Bilateral Issues

a. Iran

1. Exploration of Oil by ONGC Videsh Ltd in Iran, 3 December 2009

QUESTION:

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

- (a) whether a consortium led by ONGC Videsh Ltd. has abandoned its plan for exploration of oil from the Farsi block in Iran due to high sulphur content in the crude and hence making commercial production unviable;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether the Indian consortium is considering an option by retaining the block for possible gas production;
- (d) if so, whether the Farsi block has been assessed to have adequate gas reserves to justify the investment by the consortium; and
- (e) if so, the details thereof?

ANSWER

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

(a) & (b): No Madam. High Sulphur Content is not the reason for the Oil Field to be non commercial.

ONGC Videsh Limited (OVL) led consortia consisting of Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) and Oil India Limited (OIL) has submitted a Feasibility Report for the oil discovery based on techno-economic considerations to National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) on 26th November, 2008.

(c), (d) & (e): Commerciality of the gas find of Fazad-B gas field of Farsi Block established by the OVL led consortia has been accepted by NIOC. The Gas Initial In-Place (GIIP) is estimated to be 12.5 Trillion Cubic Feet (TCF). Master Development Plan (MDP) to develop the field is under finalization in consultation with NIOC. Preliminary estimated Investment as per MDP would be about USD 5.5 billion for sales gas option wherein Gas production is contemplated for a period of 30 year.

Source: Lok Sabha, Unstarred Question no. 2333 asked by R. Dhruvanarayana, 3 December 2009

2. Gas Based Power Projects In Iran, 4 December 2009

QUESTION:

Will the Minister of Power be pleased to state:-

(a) whether the National Thermal Power Corporation Limited (NTPC) and Power Grid Corporation of India Limited (PGCIL) have a proposal to set up a 6000 MW gas based power project in Iran; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF THE STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF POWER (BHARATSINH SOLANKI)

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

Source: Lok Sabha, Unstarred Question no. 2699 asked by Gurudas Dasgupta, 4 December 2009

3. Import of Natural Gas from Iran, 8 December 2009

QUESTION:

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

- (a) whether Government had any plan to import natural gas from Iran;
- (b) if so, whether any agreement in this regard has been signed with Iranian authorities;
- (c) if so, the details thereof;
- (d) whether the project is still on the anvil;
- (e) if so, the details thereof; and
- (f) if not, the reasons therefore?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF PETROLEUM & NATURAL GAS

(MURLI DEORA)

(a) to (f): Government is pursuing the import of natural gas from Iran through Iran-Pakistan-India (IPI) Gas Pipeline Project. Various important issues, viz., pricing of gas, delivery point of gas, project structure, security of supplies, payment of transportation tariff & transit fees for passage of natural gas through Pakistan, etc., are under discussion amongst the participating countries. Such multilateral projects involve protracted discussions, as all the aspects have to be carefully examined and deliberated upon to the satisfaction of the participating countries to protect each country's interests and to avoid any problems in the future in the successful operation of the Project. Finalization of the agreement can be achieved when satisfactory resolution of the issues under discussion is reached by the countries participating in the project, viz., Iran, Pakistan and India.

Further, Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOCL), GAIL (India) Ltd. and Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL) have signed Sale Purchase Agreements for Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) with National Iranian Gas Export Company (NIGEC) on June 13, 2005 for import of total quantity of 5 million tonnes per annum (mmtpa) for a period of 25 years. However, Iran has taken the stand that the Agreements are not effective because of lack of approval by National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC).

Source: Rajya Sabha, Unstarred Question no. 2120 asked by T.K. Rangrajan, 8 December 2009

4. India-Iran Gas Pipeline, 10 December 2009

QUESTION:

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

- (a) whether China is replacing India on the Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline project;
- (b) if so, the details thereof along with the reasons therefore; and
- (c) the status of the project as on date?

ANSWER

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

(a) & (b): No official communication has been received regarding China joining IPI gas pipeline project.

(c): India is pursuing the import of natural gas from Iran through Iran-Pakistan-India (IPI) Gas Pipeline Project. Various important issues, viz., pricing of gas, delivery point of gas, project structure, security of supplies, payment of transportation tariff and transit fees for passage of natural gas through Pakistan, etc., are under discussion amongst the participating countries.

Source: Lok Sabha, Unstarred Question no. 3395 asked by Smt. Jhansi Botcha Lakshmi, D.B. Chandre Gowda and S. Semmalai, 10 December 2009

5. Vote in Favour of IAEA resolution, 16 December 2009

QUESTION:

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

- (a) whether India had voted in favour of the IAEA resolution against building a uranium enrichment plant by Iran; and
- (b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefore?

ANSWER

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

(a) Yes. India voted in favour of the resolution of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) on Iran's nuclear issue.

(b) The resolution was adopted by 25 votes in favour, 3 against, 6 abstentions and 1 absent. India's position was laid out in the attached Explanation of Vote.

EXPLANATION OF VOTE REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PART (B) OF LOK SABHA UNSTARRED QUESTION: NO.4362 REGARDING “VOTE IN FAVOUR OF IAEA” FOR ANSWER ON 16.12.2009

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: Lok Sabha, Unstarred Question no. 4362 asked by Gurudas Dasgupta, 16 December 2009

6. India-Iran Gas Pipeline, 16 December 2009

QUESTION:

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

- (a) whether there has been any meeting between India and Iran regarding energy and trade routes recently;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) the details of the hurdles being faced in India-Iran-Pakistan pipeline project;
- (d) the measures proposed to be taken by the Government to remove these obstacles;
- (e) the time by which these are likely to be removed; and
- (f) the quantum of energy likely to be received by India as a result of this agreement?

ANSWER

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

(a) & (b) During the visit to India by Foreign Minister of Iran Mr. Manouchehr Mottaki on November 16-17, 2009, the two sides discussed, inter alia, the issue of bilateral energy cooperation, the development of Chabahar Port and Railway Project, and the International North South Corridor. A delegation led by Mr Seifollah Jashnsaz, Deputy Minister in the Iranian Ministry of Oil and President of National Iran Oil Company visited India from November 30-December 3, 2009. The two sides held discussions on various aspects of bilateral cooperation between India and Iran in the oil and gas sector.

(c) to (e) India is pursuing the import of natural gas from Iran through the said project. Issues such as pricing, delivery point, project structure, etc., are being focused on. Such multilateral projects involve protracted discussions and as such no time frame can be indicated for completion of discussions.

(f) 30 million standard cubic meter per day (mmscmd) of gas is estimated to be supplied in phase-I of the Project.

Source: Lok Sabha, Unstarred Question no. 4247 asked by Umashankar Singh and Ghansyam Anuragi, 16 December 2009

7. Vote against Iran, 17 December 2009

QUESTION:

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

- (a) whether it is a fact that India had voted in favour of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) resolution to rebuke Iran for building a uranium enrichment plant in secret; and
- (b) if so, the details and reasons therefore?

ANSWER

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

- (a) Yes. India voted in favour of the resolution at the November 2009 meeting of the Governing Board of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) on Iran's nuclear issue.
- (b) The resolution was adopted by 25 votes in favour, 3 against, 6 abstentions and 1 absent. India's position was laid out in the attached Explanation of Vote.

EXPLANATION OF VOTE REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PART (B) OF RAJYA SABHA UNSTARRED

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: Rajya Sabha, Unstarred Question no. 3122 asked by D. Raja, 17 December 2009

8. Investment by ONGC in Iranian Gas Projects, 17 December 2009

QUESTION:

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

- (a) whether the Oil and Natural Gas Corporation has decided to make billion dollar investment in Iranian gas projects;
- (b) if so, the details thereof; and
- (c) the estimated oil and gas that will be extracted from these investments?

ANSWER

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

(a) to (c): Oil and Natural Gas Corporation Limited (ONGC) is examining the viability of investment in Iranian Gas Projects. The investment decision would depend on the viability of the Projects as established through detailed due diligence exercise to be carried out which includes aspect of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) Pricing.

ONGC Videsh Limited (OVL) led consortia consisting of Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOC) and Oil India Limited (OIL) has submitted a Feasibility Report for the oil discovery in Farsi Block, Iran based on techno-economic considerations to National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) on 26th November, 2008.

Commerciality of the gas find of Fazad-B gas field of Farsi Block established by the OVL led consortia has been accepted by NIOC. The Gas Initial In-Place (GIIP) is estimated to be 12.5 Trillion Cubic Feet (TCF). Master Development Plan (MDP) to develop the field is under finalization in consultation with NIOC. Preliminary estimated Investment as per MDP would be about USD 5.5 billion for sales gas option wherein Gas production is contemplated for a period of 30 years.

Source: Lok Sabha, Unstarred Question no. 4505 asked by Anandrao Vithoba Adsul, 17 December 2009

b. Israel

9. Defence deal with Israel, 2 December 2009

QUESTION:

- (a) the total amount of arms deal of our country with Israel in the last five years;
- (b) what types of arms have been bought from Israel;
- (c) are there any conditions imposed by Israel in this regard; and
- (d) whether Pakistan has also bought the same arms from Israel?

ANSWER

(A.K. ANTONY) MINISTER OF DEFENCE

(a) to (c): Procurement of defence items is made from various indigenous as well as foreign sources including Israel in accordance with the defence procurement procedure. This is a continuous process undertaken for the modernization of the Armed Forces to keep them in a state of readiness to meet any eventuality. A number of contracts were concluded with Israel during the last five years for acquisition of various types of defence equipment. Contractual obligations are required to be met by both the sides.

(d) In the absence of specific inputs, it is difficult to comment whether Pakistan is having the same arms from Israel.

Source: Rajya Sabha, Unstarred Question no. 1397 asked by Shyamal Chakraborty and Moinul Hassan, 2 December 2009

10. Air Defence Missile System from Israel under CBI Scanner, 9 December 2009

QUESTION:

- (a) whether Government has entered into contract for the supply of Air Defence Missile System from Israel Aircraft Industries;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether it is also a fact that the industry is already under CBI investigation; and
- (d) if so, the details thereof?

ANSWER (A.K. ANTONY) MINISTER OF DEFENCE

(a) & (b): Defence Research & Development Organization (DRDO) has undertaken joint development of missiles viz. Long Range Surface to Air Missile (LRSAM) for Indian Navy and Medium Range Surface to Air Missile (MRSAM) for Indian Air Force with M/s Israel Aircraft Industries (IAI), Israel.

(c) & (d): Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has registered a regular case relating to the procurement of Barak Anti Missile Defence System for the Navy in which M/s IAI, Israel is also involved. The case is pending investigation.

Source: Rajya Sabha, Unstarred Question no. 2194 asked by A. Elvasaran, 9 December 2009

c. Palestine

11. Statement by Manjeev Singh Puri, Acting Permanent Representative, on Question of Palestine, at the 64th Session of the United Nations General Assembly on 01 December 2009

Mr. President,

At the outset, please allow me to express our appreciation for convening the discussion on the Question of Palestine at the General Assembly as we mark the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. Let me also express our appreciation for Ambassador Paul Badji, Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

Mr. President,

India has long civilizational ties with the entire region of the Middle-East and a strong tradition of support for the Palestinian cause. We voted in support of the Resolution on the United Nations Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict at the United Nations Human Rights Council and also

at the United Nations General Assembly. India believes that the conflict in West Asia is essentially political. It cannot be resolved by force. We favour a negotiated solution wherein a sovereign, independent, viable and united State of Palestine can live within secure and recognized borders, side by side at peace with Israel as endorsed in the Quartet Roadmap and UNSC Resolutions 1397 & 1515. This is also in line with our support for UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338. We also participated at the Annapolis conference in 2007. The Arab Peace Plan calls for withdrawal of Israel to pre-1967 borders, the recognition of Israel and the establishment of the State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital. We have supported this plan.

India has also called for an end to Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory and major improvements at an early date on easing restrictions within Palestine of free movement of goods and persons.

Mr. President,

India has always stood by the Palestinian people in pursuit of their legitimate goals and their efforts aimed at economic and social development with dignity and self-reliance. Towards this end, India has been doing what it can in extending development support to Palestine. In New Delhi, we have completed the Palestinian Chancery building as a gift from the Government of India and an enduring symbol of our solidarity with the people of Palestine.

Mindful of the deteriorating humanitarian situation, India contributed \$1 million in response to United Nations Relief and Works Agency's (UNRWA) Flash Appeals in the context of the conflict in Gaza in late 2008-early 2009. In this 60th anniversary year of the establishment of UNRWA, we have increased our contributions to the UNRWA.

We have furthermore contributed US\$ 10 million as budget support to the Palestinian National Authority after the International Conference to Support the Palestinian Economy for the Reconstruction of Gaza held in Sharm El-Sheikh in March 2009.

India has also participated at various donors conferences, including in Paris, Jakarta and Sharm El-Sheikh and has expeditiously implemented its pledges.

Mr. President,

Instability and violence coupled with humanitarian issues in Palestine have impacted upon the wider situation in the Middle East and beyond. There can be little doubt that the situation in Palestine remains a matter of grave concern to the international community and there is a need for all stakeholders to come together and create an environment for the earliest possible resumption of dialogue in the Middle East Peace Process.

Mr. President,

Our Prime Minister in his message on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People has reiterated that concerted and all round action is necessary to invigorate the peace process with the objective of achieving a durable, comprehensive and just settlement. We remain convinced that lasting peace in the region will contribute to global stability and prosperity.

Thank You.

Source: *Permanent Mission of India to the United Nations, New York*,
<http://www.un.int/india/2009/ind1651.pdf>

**12. Speech of Minister of State Dr. Shashi Tharoor on the occasion of
“International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People”, New
Delhi, 2 December 2009**

Your Excellency, the Ambassador of Palestine in India, Mr. Adli Hassan Shaban Sadeq,
Chief Representative, League of Arab States Mission, Dr. Ahmed Salem Saleh Al-Wahishi

Director General of the Indian Council of World Affairs, Sudhir Devare

Excellencies, distinguished invitees,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am greatly honoured to be here today amidst this august gathering to mark the important occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. All of us present here, representing diverse nations, in our own ways are here to express solidarity with the people of Palestine in their struggle for their legitimate rights. Our gestures of support also convey that it is in the interest of the entire international community that a just and comprehensive solution can be achieved resulting in a sovereign, independent, viable and united State of Palestine living within secure and recognized borders with East Jerusalem as its Capital, side by side and at peace with the State of Israel, as endorsed in the Quartet Road Map and the United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1397 & 1515. India has also supported the Arab Peace Plan as outlined in the 2002 Arab Summit held in Beirut and the 2007 Arab Summit in Riyadh. In line with its backing of the UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, India supports a negotiated solution to the West Asian conflict, which, it is convinced, is essentially political in nature and cannot be resolved by force.

As a responsible member of the international community and as a country with long-established ties with West Asia, India also desires to see a resolution to tensions in the region through dialogue. Continued expansion of settlements is not helpful to the resumption of the peace process. We hope to see early resumption of negotiations. We are concerned and welcome efforts

to invigorate the peace process. Although we do not play a role as such in the peace process as we have not been requested to do so, we have vital stakes in the process and in the West Asian region. India is closely monitoring the developments in the region which is also home to more than 4.5 million Indians and as Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru said in 1958 in a speech in the Lok Sabha, our “approach is not inimical to any country there”.

Excellencies,

Palestine has always occupied a special place in the hearts of my countrymen. India’s solidarity with the Palestinian people and its approach to the Palestinian question were guided by that apostle of peace, Mahatma Gandhi, and the struggle that he inspired for our independence. As early as in 1936, the Congress Working Committee sent greetings to Palestine and 27 September, 1936 was observed in India as Palestine Day. The 1939 Session of the Indian National Congress adopted a Resolution on Palestine and looked forward to the emergence of an independent democratic state in Palestine in which the rights of all communities would be protected. Our former Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was a passionate advocate of the rights of the Palestinian people.

India was the first non-Arab State to recognize the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people in 1975 and in 1988 became one of the first countries to recognize the State of Palestine. India opened its Representative Office in Palestine in 1996 in Ramallah following the establishment of the Palestinian National Authority.

India has always stood by the Palestinian people in pursuit of their legitimate goals and their efforts aimed at economic and social development with dignity and self reliance. Since the opening of the Representative Office in Ramallah, India has also extended material assistance to the Palestinian National Authority. Such assistance has been utilized for humanitarian relief, development projects, establishment of educational and training facilities, budgetary support and so on. India has been proud to be involved with training a large number of Palestinian officials from economic, industrial and financial sectors and special courses for Palestinian diplomats have been conducted at our Foreign Service Institute. As you may be aware, this year the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, UNRWA, is celebrating its 60th anniversary. India has increased its annual contribution from twenty thousand dollars to one million dollars. I am also happy to note that the Palestinian Embassy Building in New Delhi is nearing completion. The foundation stone of the Building was laid in the presence of Hon’ble Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh and His Excellency the President of the Palestinian National Authority Mr. Mahmoud Abbas during his visit to India in October 2008.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Before I conclude, I would like to commend the Indian Council for World Affairs for organizing this event to mark the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. In a message

for the occasion organized at the United Nations in New York, the Prime Minister has said that India remains convinced that lasting peace in the region will contribute to global stability and prosperity. As Ambassador Aziz has mentioned to us, no one quantifies the costs of the absence of peace in this vital region.

Thank you all also for being here today. I am looking forward to hearing the poetry of the late great Palestinian poet Mahmood Darwish of whom I am a great fan. But I will end with the words of another late Palestinian writer, my friend, Edward Said, who wrote in his essay “Overlapping Territories, Intertwined Histories”, “Just as none of us is outside or beyond geography, none of us is completely free from the struggle over geography. That struggle is complex and interesting because it is not only about soldiers and cannons but also about ideas, about forms, about images and imaginings”. Let us pay tribute to the idea of a free, secular, democratic Palestine that has featured in the “imaginings” of so many for the last six decades.

Thank you!

Source: *Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi*, <http://meaindia.nic.in/speech/2009/12/02ss01.htm>

d. Saudi Arabia

13. Agreement between India and Saudi Arabia, 17 December 2009

QUESTION:

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

- (a) whether India and Saudi Arabia have made amendments to the Air Services Agreement(ASA);
- (b) if so, the salient features thereof; and
- (c) the number of Indians have gone to Saudi Arabia during the last two years making use of the Saudi Arabia Carrier?

ANSWER

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

(a) and (b): Yes, Sir. The Government of India initialled an Air Services Agreement with the Government of Saudi Arabia on 23 January, 2008 and also signed a Memorandum of Understanding. The salient features of the Memorandum of Understanding include the multiple designation of airlines, capacity entitlements, points of call and unlimited cargo operations between each other's territory.

(c): During the period 01 January, 2008 to 31st August, 2009, a total of 5,75,424 passengers have travelled from India to Saudi Arabia by Saudi Arabian Airlines. Nationality-wise break of the passengers is not maintained by the Government.

Source: Lok Sabha, Unstarred Question no. 4573 asked by Milind Murli Deora, 17 December 2009

14. Talmiz Ahmad appointed as the next Ambassador of India to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 31 December 2009

TALMIZ AHMAD has been appointed as the next Ambassador of India to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, in succession of M.O.H. Farook.

He is expected to take up his assignment shortly.

Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi,

<http://meaindia.nic.in/pressrelease/2009/12/31pr02.htm>

e. Saudi Arabia: Hajj

15. Members in the Hajj Committee, 2 December 2009

QUESTION:

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

- (a) the permissible number of members in the management of State Hajj Committees as per Hajj Act, 2002;
- (b) Whether the members in the management of States Hajj Committees have been appointed as per Hajj Act, 2002;
- (c) if so, the details thereof;
- (d) if not, the details of States where members in the management of Hajj Committee are not as per the said Act; and
- (e) the steps taken by the Government to appoint the members in the management according to the Hajj Act, 2002?

ANSWER

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

- (a) The permissible number of members in State Hajj Committee as per Hajj Act 2002 is 16 (sixteen).
- (b) to (d) The formation of State Hajj Committees is the prerogative of respective States.
- (e) All the States are being encouraged to form State Hajj Committees as per Hajj Act 2002.

Source: Lok Sabha, Unstarred Question no. 2177 asked by Jai Praksh Agarwal, 2 December 2009

16. Selection of Hajj Pilgrims, 3 December 2009

QUESTION:

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

- (a) the criteria adopted by Government for selection of Hajj pilgrims through Government quota; and
- (b) the numbers of pilgrims selected by the Union Government, State-wise, during the current year particularly from Tamil Nadu?

ANSWER

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

- (a) The distribution of government quota and additional quota was released for the following categories:
- (i) Khadim-ul-Hujjaj selected by the State Hajj Committees;
- (ii) Mehram of female pilgrims, who by Saudi law, need to be accompanied by a male relative viz. father, husband, brother, son;
- (iii) States on special political considerations and receiving excess applications e.g. J&K/ Lakshadweep etc;
- (iv) Individual applicants who did not get selected in the qurrah but have an objective reason to perform Hajj i.e. family obligation, age, health and have been recommended by MPs, Ministers and other eminent persons;
- (b) State-wise distribution of quota allotted through the Hajj Committee of India during the current year is enclosed. The State of Tamil Nadu was allotted a quota of 3800.

Source: Rajya Sabha, Unstarred Question no. 1569 asked by N. Balganga, 3 December 2009

17. Hajj Pilgrims using MP Quota, 3 December 2009**QUESTION:**

Will the Minister of External Affairs be pleased to state:

- (a) The number of Hajj pilgrims that used the special quota of MPs in the year 2009;
- (b) Whether there is any discrimination in that quota; and
- (c) If so, the details thereof?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

(DR. SHASHI THAROOR)

(a) A total number of 6014 seats have been allotted to Hon'ble Members of Parliament for Hajj 2009. Efforts are made to allocate seats to each Member of Parliament requesting for the same, provided the recommendations have been received and quota is available at that time. A minimum of two seats per MP is held in reserve for such requests.

(b) No.

(c) Does not arise.

Source: Rajya Sabha, Unstarred Question no. 1573 asked by Syed Azeez Pasha, 3 December 2009

18. Hajj Reforms, 9 December 2009**QUESTION:**

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

- (a) Whether the Government has appointed a Committee namely, Rehman Khan Committee to report on Hajj reforms;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether the said Committee has given its reports to the Government;
- (d) if so, the details thereof;
- (e) whether the Government has accepted the recommendations of the Committee;
- (f) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefore;

- (g) whether the Government proposes to amend the Hajj Act; and
- (h) if so, the details thereof and the time by which a final decision is likely to be taken in this regard?

ANSWER

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

(a) & (b) K Rehman Khan, Deputy Chairman, Rajya Sabha has submitted a report towards the need to reform the system of management of Hajj pilgrimage on the lines of “Tabung Haji” of Malaysia, proposing that members of the Muslim community in India mobilize their personal savings for performing Hajj with a view to gradually ending the provision of subsidy for Hajj pilgrims by the government.

(c) to (f) The above proposal on Hajj management reforms was discussed by the Govt and subsequently a committee has been set up to examine the recommendations of K. Rehman Khan and related Hajj management reforms and prepare an appropriate model for implementation. The objective of this exercise is to aim towards gradually eliminating the subsidy provision, empowering the Hajj Committee of India including their handling the air charter operations, regulating the private tour operators and streamlining the accommodation at Mecca and Medina in a transparent manner. The report of the Committee is awaited.

(g) & (h) the amendment of the Hajj Act is not under consideration at present.

Source: Lok Sabha, Unstarred Question no. 3228 asked by Asaduddin Owaisi, 9 December 2009

19. Hajj Quotas for MPs, 9 December 2009

QUESTION:

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

- (a) the details of Hajj quota given to each Members of Parliament (MP) during last year;
- b) the details of the MPs who could not utilize their quota, during the said period;
- (c) the details of the MPs who were given more than two Hajj quota during last year and the current year;
- (d) whether there is any deviation in giving quota to MPs in proportion to Muslim population;
- (e) if so, the details thereof;

(f) whether the Government has any proposal to increase Hajj quota for MPs during the next year; and

(g) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefore?

ANSWER

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

(a) All efforts are made to allocate minimum two seats to each Member of Parliament provided their recommendations were received and quota is available at that time.

(b) & (c) A large number of recommendations for allotment of seats for Hajj 2008 & 2009 were received from Union Ministers, Members of Parliament, other dignitaries and eminent persons.

(d) & (e) No. Quota given to MPs is not decided on the basis of Muslim population of that region.

(f) & (g) The Hajj quota for the next year will be decided on the basis of Hajj agreement to be signed between Indian & Saudi Government. Therefore, any decision related to Hajj quota for the next year will depend on actual quota allotted by Saudi Government at that time.

Source: Lok Sabha, Unstarred Question no. 3286 asked by Smt. P. Jaya Prada Nahta and Rajgopal Lagadapati, 9 December 2009

20. Hajj Pilgrimage Arrangements, 9 December 2009

QUESTION:

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

(a) Whether the Government of Andhra Pradesh has requested the Ministry to convey No Objection Certificate (NOC) to the Ministry of Minorities for sanctioning the grant of Rs.10 crores for Hajj pilgrimage arrangements at Hyderabad;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) if not, the time by when NOC will be given?

ANSWER

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

(a) & (b) The Ministry had received a request from the State Government of Andhra Pradesh for grant of Rs. 10 crores for construction of separate Hajj terminal in the existing Rajiv Gandhi International Airport, Hyderabad.

(c) As the Ministry of External Affairs does not have any provision for the grants for construction of airports, no action on the request is contemplated.

Source: Lok Sabha, Unstarred Question no. 3132 asked by Prabhakar Ponnamp, 9 December 2009

21. Criteria for Private Tour Operators for Hajj, 9 December 2009

QUESTION:

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

- (a) the criteria laid down for allocating Hajj Quota among Private Tour Operators (PTOs);
- (b) whether the Government is aware of the reports of inequitable distribution of Hajj Quota and as a result thereof new PTOs could not qualify; (
- (c) if so, whether the Government have any proposal to change the rules for Hajj Quota so as to make it equitable and transparent; and
- (d) if so, the details thereof?

ANSWER

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

(a) The distribution of PTOs quota for Haj-2009 was done as per the following policy:

1. All the old PTOs who got quota in 2008 and had been found eligible for allocation of quota this year also, have been allocated quota of minimum 50 seats provided their quota allocation during 2008 was 50 seats or more.
2. Those PTOs who have been applying unsuccessfully for at least the last two years have been allotted quota of 50 seats, provided they were otherwise eligible.
3. The PTOs who had applied since last one year only i.e. in Haj-2008 and those fresh applicants who have applied this year could not be considered for allocation of quota for Haj-2009.

(b) to (d) Hajj Quota was allocated to Private Tour Operators(PTOs) in more rational, equitable and transparent manner. The policy in this regard has been given wide publicity through website.

Source: Lok Sabha, Unstarred Question no. 3145 asked by Anantha Venkatrami Reddy and S. Ramasubbu, 9 December 2009

22. Death of Hajj Pilgrims due to Swine Flu, 16 December 2009

QUESTION:

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

- (a) Whether some Hajj Pilgrims had died of Swine Flu during this year's annual Hajj Pilgrimage; and
- (b) if so, the details thereof?

ANSWER

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

- (a) Yes.
- (b) As per the information received by the Government two Indian Hajj pilgrims have so far died of Swine Flu. Their details are:
 - (i) Mohmed Essa Ali Patel, S/O Late Essa Ali Patel, R/O C-1850 Kot Parsiwad, Nava Rasta, Bharuch-392001, Gujarat, Passport No. H-2919992; Age 73 years; Pilgrim went for Hajj through a private tour operator M/S Al Hujjja International Tour and Travels, Mumbai and died on 19.11.2009 at 12:30 PM in King Abdul Aziz Hospital (Al Zahir), Mecca
 - (ii) Abdullah Thyullathil, S/O Thyullathil Ali R/O Thyllathil House, PO. Thondernadu Korame, via Vellamunda, District. Wayanad, Kerala, Passport No. : H-5114445, Cover no. KL-7688-2; Age: 58 Years/Male; Pilgrim went for Hajj through the Hajj Committee of India and died on 28.11.2009 at 04:30 PM.

Source: Lok Sabha, Unstarred Question no. 4197 asked by Milind Murli Deora, 16 December 2009

23. Next Chance to Hajjis, 17 December 2009

QUESTION:

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

- (a) whether Government is considering any proposal that people left out of this year's Hajj due to the swine flu scare would be accommodated in the next years pilgrimage; and
- (b) if so, the details thereof?

ANSWER

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

- (a) No. No Indian pilgrim was specifically left out of this year's Hajj due to the swine flu scare.
- (b) Does not arise.

Source: Rajya Sabha, Unstarred Question no. 3130 asked by Abdul Wahab Peevee, 17 December 2009

24. International Passport for Hajj Pilgrims, 17 December 2009**QUESTION:**

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

- (a) Whether it is a fact that Government has made international passport mandatory for Hajj pilgrims in place of temporary passport;
- (b) If so, the reasons therefore;
- (c) Whether Government is also aware that Hajj pilgrims were forced by regional passport offices to grease their palm for their international passport;
- (d) If so, the details of complaints received in this regard till date during last one year, State-wise;
- (e) The efforts made /proposed to be made to redress the plights of poor Hajj pilgrims; and
- (f) the other steps Government has taken for their convenience and to facilitate the Hajj pilgrims?

ANSWER

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

- (a) & (b) In accordance with the decision of the Government of Saudi Arabia conveyed to the Government of India, all Hajj pilgrims were required to travel on international passports, from Haj-2009 onwards.
- (c) & (d) No complaint of this nature was received.
- (e) Government of India issued guidelines to all the Passport Offices after consultation with the Hajj Committee of India and State Hajj Committees to ensure that no Hajj pilgrim faces any hurdle in obtaining his/her passport to undertake the pilgrimage. All passport offices were

instructed that the Hajj passports should be handed over to the Hajj pilgrims / Hajj Committee within the due date stipulated by the Committee to ensure that no Haji faced any difficulty in undertaking the pilgrimage.

(f) The Government of India makes arrangements to facilitate 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 paramedical staff, Coordinators, Assistant Hajj Officers, Hajj Assistants and Khadim-ul-Hujjaj are sent from India on short-term deputation to Saudi Arabia. A hospital in Makah and branch offices-cum-dispensaries in Mecca and Medina are set up for Hajj pilgrims. Medicines provided at these dispensaries and hospital are supplied from India and also procured locally. The government makes arrangements for providing polio, meningitis and influenza vaccinations for the pilgrims. The Hajj Committee of India provides to the pilgrims information regarding confirmation of their seats, travel documents, transportation 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 more embarkation points, Mangalore and Ranchi, were added to the already existing 17 embarkation points across the country.

Source: Rajya Sabha, Unstarred Question no. 3136 asked by Nand Kishore Yadav, 17 December 2009

f. UAE

25. UAE Aircraft in Indian Air Space, 16 December 2009

QUESTION:

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

- (a) whether an aircraft of United Arab Emirates (UAE) air force and its nine crew members were detained for allegedly carrying arms and ammunition without declaring the nature of the cargo;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether the Government has taken up the matter with the UAE in this regard; and
- (d) if so, the reaction of the UAE in this regard?

ANSWER

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

(a) Yes.

(b) On August 25, 2009, UAE Embassy in New Delhi had requested Ministry of External Affairs for Political clearance for a non-scheduled halt of flight UAF-1211(TYPE C 130H for overflying & refuelling on sectors Abu Dhabi- Calcutta- Xaianyang- Calcutta- Abu Dhabi. As per details in the application there was no mention of any arms or ammunition being carried on board. Accordingly the permission was granted. The flight (TYPE -C130 H) arrived from Abu Dhabi at Calcutta Airport on 6th September 2009 at 1730 hrs as a non-Scheduled flight. The captain of the flight, Major Ibrahim Al Shamsei, filed a declaration to the customs stating that the flight was carrying Arms/ammunition/explosives. However, since at the time of initial application, no mention of the arms/ammunition was made, the authorities at the Calcutta airport detained the aircraft & crew members for further investigation. Accordingly, after concurrence of the pilot-in-Command of the aircraft, the customs officials entered the aircraft to inquire about the nature of cargo.

(c) Yes.

(d) The UAE authorities formally regretted the omission in not clearly indicating items carried by the aircraft & described it as a “technical error”. They also provided the details of the cargo subsequently which consisted of parts of missiles.

Source: Lok Sabha, Unstarred Question no. 4262 asked by Inder Singh Namdhari, Yogi Aditya Nath, Vilas Baburao Muttemwar and Shailendra Kumar, 16 December 2009

Multilateral Issues

a. Gulf Region

26. Workers Stranded In Gulf Countries, 2 December 2009

QUESTION:

Will the Minister of OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS be pleased to state:-

- (a) whether a large number of Indian workers are stranded in Gulf countries;
- (b) if so, the reasons therefore along with the number of such workers, country-wise; and
- (c) the steps taken by the Union Government to help these stranded workers ?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF THE STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS
(VAYALAR RAVI)

(a) to (c): No, Sir. Whenever any overseas Indian worker gets stranded abroad the Indian Mission arranges repatriation in consultation with the host country Government. Workers get stranded due to loss of employment or exploitation/abuse by the employer. This Ministry has recently established Indian Community Welfare Funds at the disposal of the Indian Missions to provide support services to stranded/distressed workers.

Source: Lok Sabha, Unstarred Question no. 2041 asked by N. Cheluvaraya Swamy @ Swamygowda, 2 December 2009

27. Bid by Oil PSU in Gulf Region, 8 December 2009

QUESTION:

(a) whether Government is aware that Technip and a well-known and established company in the field of engineering technology and project management for oil and gas industry world-wide, has recently announced in October, 2009 that in the coming six to nine months projects worth \$21 billion would be awarded in Gulf region; and

(b) if so, the public sector companies like Engineers India Ltd. similarly recognized organizations, who have developed state-of-the-art capabilities in oil and gas industry, would be encouraged to compete for their relevant fields of activities or even for turn-key projects?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF PETROLEUM & NATURAL GAS (MURLI DEORA)

(a) Engineers India Limited is aware of the projects which are coming up in Middle East region and the announcement made by Technip that projects up to US\$21 billion will be awarded in near future in UAE region. These are all EPC contracts wherein the size of each package is US\$ 1 billion plus.

(b) Although, EIL has not executed any EPC project overseas till date, however, we are examining the above opportunities and finding out ways & means to pre-qualify for the same.

Source: Lok Sabha, Unstarred Question no. 2124 asked by Smt. Syeda Anwara Taimur, 8 December 2009

b. Iran in India-Russia Talks

28. On board media interaction by Foreign Secretary Nirupama Rao, 8 December 2009

Question: Madam, yesterday President Medvedev in the Joint Press Conference had said that there are a lot of concerns about the nuclear arsenals of states, he referred to Iran, and called for a

tighter control over the nuclear arsenal. Has India raised its worries with Russia regarding the safety of nuclear arsenal in Pakistan?

Foreign Secretary: The issue did come up briefly during the informal dinner that President Medvedev hosted in honour of Prime Minister the day before yesterday. We have on many occasions spoken and expressed our hope and our expectation that Pakistan will continue to safeguard its nuclear assets in a manner that ensures that there is no threat to our region. The Russian side is also sensitized to this issue. I think this was reflected in President Medvedev's response to us. They also discussed, of course, the Iran nuclear issue and recent developments relating to that.

Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi,

<http://meaindia.nic.in/pressbriefing/2009/12/09pb01.htm>

c. Manama dialogue

29. Speech by National Security Adviser M K Narayanan at the Manama Dialogue Plenary Session on Nuclear Power, Energy and Security, Manama, 12 December 2009

Mr. Chairman,

Distinguished participants,

It is indeed a pleasure to participate in the Manama Dialogue which has achieved a well deserved reputation as an International Conference of high standing. I commend the IISS, in particular, Dr. John Chipman, its Director General, for bringing together this extraordinary range of policy makers and experts for this Conference.

I propose to organize my remarks by focusing on the current trends in nuclear power globally, offer some thoughts, as seen from India's perspective, as to future trends and challenges, and nuclear security as also India's firm commitment to universal nuclear disarmament.

Mr. Chairman,

Over the past decade, there has been a major change in perception of nuclear power the world over. Today, the stage seems set for a major expansion in the use of nuclear power. This renewed and more widespread interest in nuclear power, accompanied by steady growth of the global industry, has been referred to as the global nuclear renaissance. Facts suggest that this phenomenon is here to stay.

There are 436 nuclear power plants currently in operation in the world, over 90% of them in OECD countries. Significantly, of the 53 new nuclear power reactors under construction, a large percentage is in non-OECD countries, particularly in Asia.

A significant trend is the interest in nuclear power in our region. In 2006, the GCC announced their interest in a joint nuclear development programme. Bahrain and the US signed a MoU in 2008. UAE has concluded MoUs with US and France. Egypt has said that its first reactor would be operational by 2017. Other countries which have expressed interest include Morocco, Yemen, Tunisia, Jordan and Algeria. There is a similar trend in South East Asia. Indonesia, Vietnam and Thailand all have announced plans for the construction of new nuclear power plants.

There is now greater realization of the value of nuclear power as a clean and sustainable energy source, essential to avoiding green house emission and to address the challenge of Climate Change. It is estimated that the complete nuclear power chain from mining to reactors and waste disposal emits only 3.24 grams of carbon dioxide per kilowatt hour, which compares well with wind and hydro power, and much less than fossil fuels. In the larger energy source basket, nuclear power is thus an increasingly important component. For a number of countries, nuclear power is seen as the energy co-efficient of the future.

Mr. Chairman,

Energy is vital to fuel the engine of India's economic growth which has averaged 7 to 9% during the last decade.

It is anticipated that by 2030 India's overall projected energy deficit, if we rely only on domestic fuel resources, would be 150,000 Mw. By 2050, it is expected to go up to 412,000 Mw. Nuclear power is the only effective way to bridge this gap. Our internal studies confirm that, if our plans to expand the use of nuclear power fructify, it should be possible to produce 60,000 Mw of nuclear energy by 2030. This is significant, but still highly inadequate to meet our energy deficit.

We are, however, confident that given India's mastery over key aspects of the three-stage closed nuclear fuel cycle, we can leap-frog into the future. Based on our ongoing research into advanced fuel cycles, nuclear scientists calculate that we could close the energy deficit gap of over 400,000 Mw by 2050.

Many way-stations towards this target have been identified, and several bench-marks achieved. Our 500 Mw prototype fast breeder reactor has reached an advanced stage of construction. We are experimenting with an advanced heavy water reactor which uses thorium fuel, and has inbuilt proliferation resistant characteristics as also advanced safety and security features. India's experience with fast breeder reactors and the use of the thorium cycle could prove extremely useful to ensure energy security in the future.

International cooperation is a vital aspect in progressing peaceful uses of nuclear energy. While the former Director General of the IAEA has often commended India for its very positive role in the development of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, I would like to reaffirm that we are ready to place our proven and wide ranging capabilities in the Civil Nuclear sector at the disposal of those engaged in the emerging global renaissance in nuclear energy.

We are today participants in the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor [ITER]. We are ready to help countries with small power grids wishing to enter nuclear power generation at low cost. Given our experience with thorium-based nuclear technologies we are ready to contribute to global research and development into new proliferation-resistant fuel cycles.

The peaceful uses of nuclear energy are not just about power. There are promising applications in the area of medicine, agriculture, food production and preservation, and water desalination. India has supplied a Bhabhatron-II Teletherapy unit to Vietnam for Cancer Therapy under a programme initiated by the IAEA. With regard to water management, we have a hybrid Nuclear Desalination Demonstration Plant [NDDP] at Kalpakkam based on Reverse Osmosis, which produces nearly two million litres of water per day and another desalination plant which produces 4.5 million litres water per day. This has greatly helped redress water shortages in some of our coastal areas. Nuclear science has also helped in the rejuvenation of mountain springs that are sources of drinking water in the high Himalayas.

Mr. Chairman,

Last year, a new chapter regarding Civil Nuclear Cooperation internationally was opened as far as India was concerned, following the approval first of an India-Specific Safeguards Agreement by the IAEA, and next, the decision of the Nuclear Suppliers Group to resume Civil Nuclear Cooperation with India. The NSG's decision to recognize India's status as a country with advanced nuclear technology, the clean exemption accorded to India on account of its impeccable record of non-proliferation, and the recognition given to India's responsible use of civil nuclear technology are significant developments. We are now witnessing an explosion in regard to Civil Nuclear Cooperation agreements with countries across the globe.

Mr. Chairman,

India has always been conscious of the possible misuse of sensitive nuclear technologies. India, hence, maintains for this reason, effective export controls on nuclear materials and related technologies. Even though we are not a party to the NPT or a Member of the Nuclear Suppliers Group, we have adhered even more strictly than many NPT signatories, to non-proliferation norms and requirements. We fully endorse IAEA's concerns in this regard and are supportive of its efforts to raise the bar on these issues.

Mr. Chairman,

The task before the international community is to adopt a more inclusive and forward-looking approach to shape the ongoing nuclear renaissance. At the same time, we believe that efforts to promote peaceful uses of atomic energy would be strengthened by a renewed commitment to the universal elimination of nuclear weapons. India has a longstanding commitment to global non-discriminatory and verifiable nuclear disarmament. India was the first country to call for a ban on nuclear testing in 1954, and for a non-discriminatory treaty on non-proliferation in 1965.

In 1988, India re-emphasized this commitment through Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's "Action Plan for Ushering in a Nuclear Weapon Free World and Non-violent Order" at the UN General Assembly. In 2006, India again put forward a set of proposals at the UN General Assembly that outlined specific steps that would lead to the elimination of nuclear weapons. This included a proposal for the negotiation of a Nuclear Weapons Convention that would prohibit the development, production, stockpiling and use of nuclear weapons and providing for their elimination within a specified timeframe.

Mr. Chairman,

It is unfortunate that all these years there has not been much progress in regard to nuclear disarmament. We feel encouraged, however, by some positive signs, of late, of putting nuclear disarmament back on the international agenda. The proposal co-authored by Dr. Kissinger, George Shultz, William Perry and Sam Nunn, leading to the very significant speech made by President Barack Obama at Prague in April this year - wherein he outlines a vision of a world free of nuclear weapons – has gladdened our heads. We also feel greatly encouraged by the willingness of the United States and Russia to negotiate further cuts in their nuclear arsenals.

Mr. Chairman,

I would like to recall here that in the early 1980s, India had tabled a Resolution entitled Convention on the Prohibition of the Use of Nuclear Weapons which calls for the prohibition of the use of nuclear weapons under any circumstances. In 1988, India initiated a Resolution calling for immediate steps to reduce the risk of accidental use, including de-alerting and de-targeting of nuclear weapons.

Mr. Chairman,

This brings me to the threat posed by terrorists gaining access to nuclear materials and technologies. In our view, nuclear terrorism possibly poses the gravest threat to global security and mankind to-day. An act of nuclear terrorism could have catastrophic consequences.

Preventive measures are vital. The world must acknowledge and admit the possible link between WMDs and international terrorism.

In addition, we believe there is need to put in place an international response. India's resolution on measures to prevent terrorists from gaining access to WMDs, adopted by consensus at the UNGA, aims at strengthening international resolve to prevent terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction. India greatly welcomes President Obama's initiative to host a Summit on Nuclear Security in April next year. India will contribute actively to the success of the Summit.

Mr. Chairman,

In conclusion, I would like to quote from a most recent speech of Indian PM at the International Conference on Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy in September this year. I believe, this aptly summarizes the approach we can follow to ensure access to nuclear energy as well as its security "If we use the power of the atom wisely for the universal good, the possibilities are unbounded. If we do not, the consequences would also be devastating for peace and progress that all nations seek for their people. The choices are stark and the challenges are indeed daunting, but it is not beyond the imagination of the human mind to devise suitable solutions and strategies. This task will require the collective will, wisdom and determination of the world community, but it is a task that can no longer be put off".

Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi

<http://meaindia.nic.in/speech/2009/12/12ss02.htm>

Miscellaneous

30. Offshore Campuses of Indian Universities, 4 December 2009

The University Grants Commission (UGC) has framed regulations, namely, the University Grants Commission (Establishment of and Maintenance of Standards in Private Universities) Regulations, 2003, which, inter alia, provide that a private university can open off-shore campuses in foreign countries only after obtaining permissions from the Government of India and the host country. According to the UGC guidelines for considering proposals for declaring an institution as "deemed to be university" under Section 3 of the UGC Act, 1956, it would be permissible for the "deemed to be university" to open academic Centre(s) in any of the foreign countries after obtaining due permission from Government of India and the host country.

According to the University Grants Commission, the following institutions 'deemed-to-be-universities' have approved off-shore campuses:-

S.No.	Name of Institutions ‘Deemed-to-be University’	Country
1.	Birla Institute of Technology & Science, Pilani, Rajasthan	United Arab Emirates
2.	Birla Institute of Technology & Science, Mesra, Ranchi	Oman, Bahrain
3.	Manipal Academy of Higher Education, Manipal	Malaysia United Arab Emirates and Oman
4.	Vinayaka Mission’s Research Foundation Salem, Tamil Nadu	Thailand
5.	Sri Ramachandra Medical College & Research Institute, Chennai	Mauritius

Public Universities and institutions may set up campuses abroad, if so permitted under the relevant State Act or Memorandum of Association, under which a university or institution is established. According to the existing provisions, a Central University is not allowed to open off-shore campuses.

This information was given by the Union Minister of Human Resource Development, Kapil Sibal in a written reply to a question in Rajya Sabha on 4 December 2009.

Source: Ministry of Human Resource Development, New Delhi, Press Release, 4 December 2009, <http://www.pib.nic.in/release/release.asp?relid=55202>

31. Statement by Mr. Manjeev Singh Puri, Acting Permanent Representative, on the Situation in the Middle East, at the 64th Session of the United Nations General Assembly on 01 December 2009

Mr. President,

At the outset, please allow me to express our sincere appreciation for scheduling this discussion on an important subject that demands our collective attention - The situation in the Middle East. Today’s discussions that follow the commemoration of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people are timely and appropriate.

Mr. President,

As a nation with age-old historic and cultural ties with the Middle East, India has an abiding interest in the early resolution of the unresolved issues that have troubled the region since the inception of the United Nations. The West Asian region is of vital importance to India. The region is home to nearly 5 million Indians and is an important source for India's energy needs.

India's commitment to the Palestinian cause, as well as its solidarity with the Palestinian people, are well-known. Our ties with the friendly people of Palestine are rooted in our common history and dates back to our struggle for independence. India remains unwavering in its support to the Palestinian people in their struggle for their legitimate rights.

Mr. President,

The conflict in West Asia being essentially political in nature, it cannot be resolved by force. We have consistently supported the Middle East Peace Process in all its tracks and wish to see the creation of an environment for the earliest possible resumption of dialogue in the Middle East Peace Process. We favour a negotiated solution wherein a sovereign, independent, viable and united State of Palestine can live within secure and recognized borders, side by side at peace with Israel as endorsed in the Quartet Roadmap and UNSC Resolutions 1397 & 1515.

We are also supportive of the Arab Peace Plan and have called for an end to Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory along with early easing of restrictions within Palestine of free movement of persons and goods.

Mr. President,

India is aware that genuine peace in the region also requires resolution of other issues on the remaining tracks of the Middle East Peace Process, including restoration of other Arab lands that remain under occupation. Progress in the Lebanese and Syrian tracks of the peace process is important for achieving comprehensive and durable peace in the region. Our leadership is in touch with our interlocutors in the region at the highest level.

Mr. President,

India remains steadfast in its commitment in rendering assistance to the Palestinian people, including in capacity building and national reconstruction.

We have also contributed to United Nations peacekeeping efforts in the region.

Mr. President,

Given the complexity of the task, unprecedented determination, goodwill and capacity to offer and accept compromises and concessions are needed on all sides. It is here that the members of the international community have a collective duty to help in creating a favourable environment

within which the negotiations can move forward. Concerted and all round action is necessary to invigorate the peace process with the objective of achieving a durable, comprehensive and just settlement. We remain convinced that lasting peace in the region will contribute to global stability and prosperity.

Thank you, Mr. President.

Source: *Permanent Mission of India to the United Nations, New York,*

<http://www.un.int/india/2009/ind1650.pdf>

b. Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC)

32. Representative of OIC for Jammu and Kashmir, 9 December 2009

QUESTION:

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

- (a) whether the Organisation of Islamic Countries (OIC) have appointed a representative for Jammu and Kashmir;
- (b) if so, the details thereof; and
- (c) the reaction of the Government thereto?

ANSWER

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

- (a) Yes.
- (b) The Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) Contact Group on Jammu and Kashmir met on September 28, 2009 on the sidelines of 64th UN General Assembly session in New York and announced the appointment of OIC's Special Envoy on Kashmir.
- (c) 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." We have also conveyed bilaterally to several OIC members that the passage of such resolutions is not helpful.

Source: *Lok Sabha, Unstarred Question no. 3261 asked by Yogi Adityanath, 9 December 2009*

c. Identity, Citizenship and Empowerment

33. Address by the Hon'ble Vice President of India M. Hamid Ansari at the Khuda Bakhsh Memorial Lecture at Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library, at Patna on 12 December 2009

I am privileged to be invited here to deliver the Khuda Bakhsh Lecture on the occasion of the death centenary of Khan Bahadur Khuda Bakhsh. My thrill at the honour bestowed is subdued by the realisation of my own inadequacy.

Maulavi Mohammad Bakhsh and his son Khuda Bakhsh are known to us by their simplicity, dedication to a cause and single mindedness of purpose. This institution is amongst a handful of its kind in the world. It is a unique collection of Persian and Arabic manuscripts, described by a visitor as “an enclosed garden of precious things.” These testify to the richness of the civilisation of Islam to which India and Indians contributed in no small measure. One characteristic of it is the diversity of the cultural dialogue conducted over centuries between peoples of diverse stocks and traditions and the interaction between Islamic values and the historical experience of Muslim communities.

The late Professor Mohammad Mujeeb concluded his monumental work *The Indian Muslims*, published in 1967, with what he termed “a note of warning”. “Generalisations about the Indian Muslims”, he wrote, “can only be partial statements of truth and would, therefore, be misleading.” Commenting on the inadequacy of prevailing historical perception, he added that “the Indian Muslims are judged by the non-Muslims and, vice versa, the non-Muslims by the Muslims, as if the historical record of one party could be separated from the record of the other, and each party answerable only for itself.”

Equally relevant is Richard Eaton's observation about the “diverse variety Indian Islamic traditions” that reflect “both the dynamism of Islam and the fluidity of Indo-Islamic identities.”

Both judgements signal uniqueness. They were arrived at after encyclopaedic surveys of a thousand years of political, intellectual and cultural history in which the past journeyed into the present. Every stage of this journey was marked by debate and dissent, reflective of what were perceived to be prevailing challenges. It is therefore of critical relevance to India of today that counts 160 million Muslims amongst its citizens who constitute 13.4 percent of the population of the country.

There is also an external dimension to this identity. India is not a part of the ‘*Muslim World*’ but is not away from it; not a Muslim majority state in statistical terms yet home to the third largest community of Muslims in the world; not a society focused on Muslim welfare only but one in which the Muslims, as an integral part of a larger whole, constitutionally claim the attention that every other section does. The Indian Muslim community also has a history of engagement with the larger Muslim world and has contributed in intellectual, cultural and material terms to its enrichment.

My endeavour today is to explore two aspects of the interaction that has characterised the Indian experience:

Have the Muslims allowed their parameters to be frozen in time and taken too much for granted?

- Have they been sufficiently critical? Is there a need of newer impulses to respond to new situations?

Both relate to the debate within the community as also to interaction with the wider national and international community. Both have a contemporary relevance. Both are emotive and could be evaded if the instinct of caution were to prevail:

*Udhar mashkook hai meri sadaqat
Idhar bhi badgumani kam nahi hai*

The effort, nevertheless, must be made.

II

The discussion needs to be posited in the contemporary Indian reality. Ours is a plural society, a secular polity, and a state structure that is democratic and based on Rule of Law. Plurality is an existential reality; responding to its imperative, the Founding Fathers of the Republic crafted the Constitution endowed with the values enunciated in its Preamble: a sovereign, socialist, secular, and democratic republic dedicated to the achievement of justice, equality, liberty and fraternity. Each of these enunciates a comprehensive agenda; some objectives have been achieved; others remain work in progress. These political virtues are in essence interlinked and inter-dependent and cannot be considered as replacements or substitutes. Some are of older vintage, other are of recent origin.

The Indian reality pertaining to its Muslim population has another dimension. This was portrayed in the Sachar Committee Report of 2006 that examined the ground situation pertaining to identity, security and equity, highlighted facts emanating from official data, and made recommendations for corrective and affirmative action.

What conclusions do we draw from our experience of six decades in terms, firstly, of the conceptual framework and, secondly, of the actual experience?

Let us begin with plurality. It is a social reality that has manifested itself in different ways in different periods of our long history. It was cherished and relished:

*Gul haai ranga rang se hai zeenat-e-chaman
Ai Zauq is jahan ko hai zaib ekhtelaaf se*

Pluralism indicates the presence of differences and marks a departure from policies aimed at annihilating the other; it however remains silent about the public status of these communities.

Cultural pluralism of the past thus existed within acknowledged structures of authority and did not seek to place it in a framework of equality. The contemporary constitutional framework of equality and secularism, however, provides it a different enabling atmosphere. “In today’s India,” writes Asim Ray, “tolerant pluralism is totally meaningless and impotent unless it is thoroughly rooted out of its traditional mores, and is relocated on the basis of equalitarian and egalitarian principles”. Such relocation, he adds, can only be achieved if all religious groups dedicate themselves to an overarching spiritual ideal of living together. This brings forth “three interconnected ideas: repudiating the idea of the state as belonging to the dominant group; replacing assimilationist and exclusionary nation-building policies with policies of recognition and accommodation; and acknowledging historic injustice and offering amends for it.” This imposes obligations on the state to promote equal treatment. It must, as Gurpreet Mahajan puts it, acknowledge and accommodate diverse cultural communities as equal partners: “Only when the diversity that comprises the totality is reflected in the universal can communities have a sense of identity and equality.”

The same holds for secularism. The concept itself, mentioned though not defined in the text, is accepted as part of the basic structure of the Constitution. It pertains to three sets of relations in a society: between religion and the individual (freedom of religion); between the state and the individual (citizenship); and between the state and religion (separation of state and religion). The basic debate in India on the meaning and content of secularism has ranged on two principal approaches, namely (a) neutrality of the state vis-à-vis religions to ensure a basic symmetry of treatment between citizens of different religious communities and (b) prohibition of religious activities in the functioning of the state. The former implies respect for and implementation of rights given to religious minorities. The record of six decades shows that flawed practice has at times tended to dilute these principles. The devil, as always, lies in the detail of implementation and the “major premise” in the functioning of state machinery. There is also a need to probe Asghar Ali Engineer’s observation that “increasing democratisation should have meant more secularisation, but increased democratisation is resulting in greater communalisation.” The inevitable conclusion is that patterns of political mobilisation in the country have not always adhered to our constitutional ideals and have exacerbated societal fault lines.

In regard to state structure, the Constitution prescribed the form of political democracy. This has produced good results and empowered the citizenry. The working of the democratic process, however, has lent weight to Ambedkar’s foreboding about the contradiction between political equality and social and economic inequality and about the need to have one man one vote and one vote one value. The inequality trap thus created, as the Report of the Expert Group on Diversity Index put it last year, “prevent the marginalised and work in favour of the dominant group in society.” As a result, it adds, “unequal economic opportunities lead to unequal outcomes which in turn lead to unequal access to political power. This creates a vicious circle since unequal power structure determines the nature and functioning of the institutions and their policies. All these result in persistence of initial conditions.” Debate is also beginning to focus on the relationship between caste and class and between caste and minority; it has been argued that “the politics of inclusion has to go beyond caste inequalities as deprivation and discrimination are widespread and not confined to a single community or group”. The situation is aggravated, in actual governance, by the fraying of the Rule of Law norms.

On all three counts, therefore, practice has fallen short of the promise. What has been its impact – physical and psychological - on the largest minority? What has been the direction of debate within? How, and to what extent, has it interacted with the larger citizen body and sought solutions?

III

Insecurity, frustration and uncertainty characterised the Indian Muslim mind in the immediate aftermath of Partition. Evidence of the official attitude in earlier years, cited by Ramachandra Guha, leaves little room for doubt. Balraj Puri summed up the position succinctly in an essay written in 1993: “Their expectations were low and fears high...Gradually, the mood of withdrawal and resignation gave way to consciousness of rights, assertion of identity and protests against perceived injustices...” The grievances (with some important local variants) centred on five core concerns: security, employment and reservations, Urdu, Aligarh Muslim University and Muslim Personal Law. The community’s internal discourse on these as also in the wider Indian circle is, therefore, of relevance. It was articulated through the ulema, political leaders, intellectuals and the general public. In many cases, these categories over-lapped; their responses varied. The record of six decades suggests an unduly defensive approach, sporadic and emotional rather than systematic and rational. The internal discourse repeated an old lament:

*Ab who altaf nahin, hum pe enayat nahin
Baat ye kya hai ke pahle si madaraat nahin?*

Suggestions for possible corrections were few, unfocused and far in between. On the other side, the wider community and the political class preferred to be in a state of denial. As a result an inter-community dialogue to seek correctives did not emerge; this enhanced distances.

Security concerns and the inability of the state apparatus, from time to time, to ensure physical security still tend to condition reactions across the board. It has affected visibility in public spaces and induced ghettoisation with all its attendant consequences. The same holds good for livelihood concerns. The government’s follow up actions on the Sachar Committee Report has made some impact but many of the grievances persist, as is evident from the thrust of testimonies given in the meeting organised recently in New Delhi by a civil society group. Some of the recommendations for corrective action emanating from the meeting need to be given a closer look.

The patterns of differentiation in the employment of Muslims in the public and private sectors as well as deprivation from other forms of state largesse, identified by the Sachar Report and other studies, combined with low performance levels in education, has caused economic hardship and given a fresh impetus to the demand for reservations, notwithstanding its evident limitations. Some of the state governments have seen merit in it and responded in varying degrees. The Ranganath Mishra Commission, whose report is yet to be made public, is said to have recommended specific steps based on assessment of backwardness irrespective of religion. More is likely to be heard about this in the coming months and years.

In regard to Urdu, there is sufficient evidence to show that it suffered from deliberate official neglect in some of the states. Jawaharlal Nehru complained about it to the Chief Ministers as early as 1954. Half a century later and belying the requirement of Article 350A, large segments of a generation have grown up without knowing their mother tongue. Equally glaring is the failure of Urdu-knowing people to nurture the language, particularly among the youth. The general public, apart from occasional couplets and more frequent melodies in Mumbai movies, considers Urdu synonymous with Muslims with its teaching confined to madrasas or universities but rarely undertaken in normal schools. An international conference on Urdu language in 2003 recommended that “in order to protect Urdu in its land of birth, while it flourishes abroad, a national movement for the revival of Urdu commanding strong political will is the need of the hour”. There is little evidence of this taking shape. What was said many years back still holds good: *Sad salah jalse huai, magar is se zubaan ki yaad to qaim rahti hai, taraqqi nahin hoti*. Thus the onus for salvaging Urdu rests primarily with those who claim it as mother tongue and those who value its inherent strength and beauty and its substantial contribution to Indian literature and culture.

The demand for the acknowledgement of the distinctive, minority, character of the Aligarh Muslim University (to rectify a Supreme Court ruling of 1965) has been a persistent one but seems to have lost its centrality in community perceptions with the emergence of good quality minority-run institutions of higher and professional education in several states and the resultant erosion of AMU’s all-India identity and character. It remains to be seen if the attempt now underway to reincarnate the AMU in different parts of the country and link it to the mother institution by an umbilical cord of uncertain quality and character would necessarily serve better either the purpose of minority education in specific minority-concentration areas or do away with the demand to restore the minority character of the university.

The concern over protection of Muslim Personal Law from parliamentary legislation is of later vintage and surfaced only in 1972 in the wake of a suggestion that an effort be made to move towards a uniform civil code. The debate has thrown up polarised positions and generated more heat than light. More relevant is the argument that the provision of Article 44 does not demand a “mechanical application of a single family law to the entire nation by one stroke of legislation” since it goes against its rationale and ignores ground realities. This is supported by the Supreme Court’s observation that “a uniform law, though it is highly desirable, enactment thereof in one go may be counter-productive to the unity and integrity of the nation” and that “the mischief or defect most acute may be remedied by process of law in stages”. This notwithstanding, the need for segregating harmful social custom from religious law per se does stare the community in the face and seeks a response; so does the precedent set by a number of Muslim countries to codify the law relating to marriage, divorce and succession. “Voluntary surrender of intellectual independence”, to use Allama Iqbal’s phrase, does not signify a vibrant community; nor is self-imposed isolation an answer.

IV

Do these readings become an imperative for course correction? Do they provide sufficient social and political momentum for change? Our national objective is inclusive growth. The state has to ensure this in its policy formulation and, more importantly, in its implementation. Public support

thus becomes an essential ingredient. It is here that the citizen body in its entirety has to shoulder its responsibility and try to dilute if not undo the binary construction of the social universe. By the same token, Muslim citizens need to acknowledge the insufficiency of their interface with the rest of the citizen body and the limitations of their initiatives on self-help in social and educational matters needed to bring about a qualitative change in approach. Egalitarian pluralism, in other words, propels counterpart obligations for both the Self and the other.

Many in this audience would know that the corrective was prescribed a long time back:

*Khuda ne aaj tak uss qaum ki haalat nahin badli
Na ho jisko khayaal aap apni haalat ke badalne ka*

There is, specifically, a requirement to address three challenges:

Sustained, candid, and uninterrupted interaction with fellow citizens without a syndrome of superiority or inferiority.

- Involvement of all segments of the community, particularly women who constitute half the population and are to be empowered in social responsibilities as equal partners with Muslim men, and
- Self-empowerment in areas where competence already exists, making the best use of government assistance that is available, and creating capability to benefit from the opportunities being offered by an expanding economy.

A careful observer has summed up the requirement in blunt terms: “*Fiza aap ke haq main bhale badal rahi ho magar jab tak aap aage barh kar us se faaida nahin uthaenge, kuch nahin hone wala*”.

The failure of communication with the wider community has tended to freeze the boundaries of diversities that characterise Indian society. People have tended to live together separately. As a result, stereotypes have been developed and nurtured. Many years ago Edward Said had portrayed western perceptions of Islam and Muslims: “For the right, Islam represents barbarism; for the left, medieval theocracy; for the centre, a kind of distasteful exoticism”. In our country, mercifully, perceptions were less stark thanks to the cultural interaction of a thousand years. However, the politics of history text books has left its imprint on the mind of a good section of the public. Media images add to this. The past, however rosy or gory, will neither sustain the present nor help create a better future. There is therefore an urgent need to correct the image, go beyond identity issues, project a more holistic view of Muslims as normal human beings and fellow citizens with the same rights and responsibilities as other citizens. The requirement is of an authentic dialogue among equals about the universality of values. Its objective should be Gandhiji’s “union of hearts”. Islam’s emphasis on observance of ethical principles in interaction with all human beings should help Muslims to propel a positive image.

In regard to the status of women the dead weight of tradition, poverty and communal politics has resulted in three deficits: (a) literacy (b) economic power resulting from work and income, and (c) autonomy of decision making. This has produced a pattern of structured disempowerment. It

is most visible amongst the poor. It is therefore imperative to seek correctives through social awakening; in this effort religious texts are not an impediment, social custom is. The endeavour should be inclusive; the traditionalists, who have a wider social reach, have to be included and reminded of Islam's teachings on the status of women as also of the imperative of our times. What is needed is a virtual revolution in our approach to this question. The examples of education of women in Muslim societies like Indonesia, Malaysia, Iran and Turkey, and its eventual impact on the status of women in society, can be emulated with benefit. Given the ground situation, a beginning can be made by a time-bound programme of opening primary and secondary schools for girls in Muslim concentration localities. This, and the scholarship schemes being implemented by the government, should show some results over a five year period.

The third challenge is of empowerment and self-empowerment. The state can assist as it must, and is committed to do so; by the same logic, however, this only initiates the process and cannot be the end of it. The syndrome of victim-hood does not help and there are lessons to be learnt from the experience of other minorities. An expanding economy like ours needs active participation in emerging opportunities and in equipping the youth with skills to improve employability. In India of today, time is of critical importance; so is the need to remember that mediocrity means marginalisation. There are a great many success stories in small and medium businesses, educational institutions and in professions. These need to be studied, publicised and internalised. The process, admittedly, is unevenly spread and a much greater community and governmental effort is needed in the northern and eastern states. It can, nevertheless, be said that a new Muslim identity is emerging in different regions, language areas, professional groups, and social classes. It exudes confidence in varying degrees, refuses to shoulder the burden of the past, and is assertive about the rights due to it as citizen. They thus become partners in the promotion of inclusive development.

V

Let us look again at the characteristic of uniqueness. This has three dimensions: of India being a plural, secular and democratic state, of its Muslim minority being the third largest community of Muslims in the world, and of this minority's distinctive experience in terms of cultural contributions and dialogue. Indian Muslims constitute 10 percent of the total Muslim population of the world. Other countries where Muslims live as significant minorities (Ethiopia, China, Russia and Tanzania) do not have the democratic framework or the record of cultural interaction; on the other hand, the Muslim numbers in individual Western countries are a miniscule percentage of their populations. The Indian experience and the Indian Muslim experience, therefore, could be of relevance to others also, particularly in the context of globalisation that has induced much greater mobility of people. More and more countries in the world, therefore, will be called upon to accommodate diversity within a framework of equality; many of them are encountering conceptual and practical difficulties. India thus offers an alternate working model of pluralism in thought and action.

Allow me to conclude by submitting that despite our credible record of accommodation of diversity, it would be a folly to consider it a finished product. A living society evolves continuously in terms of its perceptions and practices, including those pertaining to equality, plurality, secularism, human rights and minority rights. The deepening of the democratic process

in the country, and heightened consciousness of egalitarian diversity, would unavoidably propel all segments of the population to exercise the moral muscle, explore the normative potential and question some of the traditional symbols, customs and prejudices. The social and economic rejuvenation of Indian Muslims is important for its internal dimension, as also for revitalising India's traditional engagement with, and contribution to, the Muslim world beyond our borders.

While the Indian Constitution was well ahead of its time in recognizing diversities and in providing for representation of and affirmative action for identified collectivities in our formal democratic structures, there would come a time when we would need to revert to focus on redressing the deprivations of individual citizens, irrespective of their group affiliations.

Eternal vigilance, it is said, is the price of liberty. There is, therefore, a need to be vigilant, keep the process on a progressive track, and prevent regressions. The key seems to lie in a sincere, unconditional and uninterrupted dialogue and requisite corrective action within the framework of the Constitution. All segments of society, majority and minority, have a national duty to do so:

*Mere ahl-e-watan yeh aadmiyat ka taqaaza hai
Muhabbat ka, sharaafat ka, hameeyat ka taqaaza hai*

I thank the Khuda Bakhsh Library for inviting me today. I am confident that in the decades to come scholarship will continue to come to this national institution to quench its thirst, and bless its founders. The city of Patna is indeed fortunate to be its host, and is rightly proud of it.

*Source: Vice President of India, New Delhi,
<http://vicepresidentofindia.nic.in/printable.asp?id=254>*

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.rajasabha.nic.in and Lok Sabha www.loksabha.nic.in

Note: One Crore = 10 million

Anjani Kumar Singh is a Doctoral candidate in the School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, new Delhi.

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Editor, MEI India Speaks: P R Kumaraswamy