



MEI INDIA SPEAKS

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No. 11

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By
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Bilateral

a. Iran

1. Relations between Iran and China, 6 May 2010

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

(a): whether it is a fact that over the years Iran and China appear to be getting closer in the fields of commerce and politics;

(b): if so, the facts in this regard; and

(c): whether it is also a fact that the impact of the relationship of both these countries over India has been assessed; and

(d): if so, the reaction of Government thereto?

Answer: The Minister of External Affairs (S. M. Krishna):

(a) & (b): According to reports, economic, commercial and political relations between China and Iran have grown in recent years. Iran is currently a major supplier of crude oil and natural gas to China. Iran is also an important destination for Chinese investment and goods. Trade between Iran and China was reported to have reached US\$ 29 billion in 2009. It has been reported that Chinese companies have concluded a number of agreements with their Iranian counterparts in the area of oil and gas, and in the areas of construction and investment.

(c) & (d): Government takes all such steps as are necessary to safeguard the country's interest.

Source: Rajya Sabha (Council of States), Unstarred Question No. 4500 asked by Raj Mohinder Singh Majitha, <http://164.100.47.5/qsearch/QResult.aspx>

2. India's Relationship with US, 6 May 2010

Question: Will the minister of external Affairs be pleased to state:

(a): the impact on India's relationship with America consequent upon aligning with Russia and China on the issue of sanctions against Iran; and

(b): whether it is part of 'Look East' policy?

Answer: The Minister of External Affairs (S.M. Krishna):

(a): As a Member of the UN Security Council, the US Government have stated their expectation that all UN Member States, including Iran, will act under their Charter obligations to implement the UN Security Council Resolutions aimed at persuading Iran to suspend nuclear related activities that violate Iran's Treaty obligations and international commitments. The US Government have approached UN Member States, including India, to support the broader international community's effort to isolate Iran with the aim of inducing Iran to desist from developing nuclear weapons and destabilizing the region. India has expressed the view that sanctions on Iran have proved to be counter-productive in the past and that differences with Iran are best resolved peacefully through dialogue and negotiation.

(b): The above issue is not linked to India's 'Look East' Policy.

Source: Rajya Sabha (Council of States), Starred Question No. 589 asked by Shreegopal Vyas, <http://164.100.47.5/qsearch/QResult.aspx>

b. Israel

3. Delay in delivery of AWACS by Israel, 5 May 2010

Question: Will the Minister of Defence be pleased to state:

(a): whether Indian Air Force had struck a deal for purchase of three AWACS with Israel of which the first aircraft came after a delay of one year, and the second is to be followed after a delay of seven months;

(b): the time by when the third AWACS is to be delivered;

(c): whether it is adequate for country's Air Force; and

(d): whether there is any plan to produce the system in India itself, in collaboration with Israel?

Answer: The Minister of Defence (A. K. Antony):

(a): The contract for supply of three Airborne Warning And Control System (AWACS) aircraft was signed with M/s Elta, Israel on 5th March 2004. The first and second AWACS aircraft were delivered to the Indian Air Force on 25th May 2009 and 25th March 2010 respectively as per the revised delivery schedule.

(b): The delivery of the third aircraft is planned for December 2010.

(c): Additional AWACS aircraft are planned to be procured in the 12th, 13th and 14th Plans.

(d): The Defence Research and Development Organisation is developing an indigenous Airborne And Early Warning system for use of the Indian Air Force.

Source: Rajya Sabha (Council of States), Unstarred Question No. 4347 asked by Lalit Kishore Chaturvedi, <http://164.100.47.5/qsearch/QResult.aspx>

4. Relation with Israel and Pakistan, 6 May 2010

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

(a): whether Government has adopted the policy of better relations with Israel compared to Palestine;

(b): whether it is a shift from previous foreign policy of the country;

(c): if so, the reasons therefore; and

(d): the present outlook of Government in these matters?

Answer: The Minister of External Affairs (S. M. Krishna):

(a): No.

(b): No.

(c): Does not arise.

(d): India has cordial relations with all countries in the region, including Israel and Palestine. India's commitment to the Palestinian cause is an important component of our long established foreign policy. Our relations with no country are conducted at the expense of our relations with any other, third, country.

Source: Rajya Sabha (Council of States), Unstarred Question No. 4506 asked by Mohammed Adeb. <http://164.100.47.5/qsearch/QResult.aspx>

c. Kuwait

5. India-Kuwait Cooperation in Petroleum Sector, 5 May 2010

A high level Indian delegation comprising P. K. Sinha, Additional Secretary & Financial Adviser, Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, B. M. Bansal, Chairman of Indian Oil Corporation Ltd. (IOC), A. S. Ujwal, Executive Director, IOC, and other senior officials, was in Kuwait on May 2-3, 2010. The delegation called on Indian Ambassador HE Ajai Malhotra on May 3, 2010. Later the same day IOC signed a Crude Oil Supply Contract for import from Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) of 9 million metric tons of Kuwaiti crude oil during financial year 2010-11.

India is the second largest export destination of Kuwaiti crude oil and annually meets 10%-11% of its oil import needs from Kuwait. IOC is one of three Indian organizations importing crude oil from Kuwait. IOC has a long-standing crude oil supply term contract relationship with KPC. It also contracted for import of about 350,000 metric tons of LPG from KPC during 2009.

With an annual turnover of over US\$ 60 billion, IOC is India's biggest commercial enterprise and owns and operates 9 of India's 19 refineries. IOC also offers expertise in oil refining, marketing, transportation, training, and R&D, besides technical consulting services for refinery operations, turn-around maintenance, etc.

Source: Indian Embassy, Kuwait. <http://www.indembkwt.org/press/05may10.htm>

d. Oman

6. Report on India-Oman Trade Promotion Seminars, 6 May 2010

At a time when the world witnessed recessionary phase, Indian Economy proved its resilience and achieved 6.7 per cent growth rate. During the last couple of years, many Indian companies have won international recognition for manufacturing excellence, technologies and services in Oil & Gas and Refineries and exploration, heavy Industries such as electricity, green coal technologies, enhanced oil recovery, communication, software, space and satellites and Information technology. On the other hand Omani Economy also proved its strong base with the continuation of large scale development programs.

Within the framework of strengthening already existing excellent bilateral commercial relations between Oman and India, Embassy of India, Muscat organised business seminars in various cities of Oman to introduce India's export oriented sectors. Under the theme business seminars were organised in Sohar on 22 February, Sur on 6 March, Nizwa on 8 March and Buraimi on 22 March and Salalah on 12 April, 2010. The objective of the seminars was to communicate the advantage of conducting business with India and also the strength of Indian brands and companies in manufacturing, industry, infrastructure, telecom, information technology to the Omani trading companies and business houses.

Business seminars, hosted by the ambassador of India His Excellency Anil Wadhwa, were organised in collaboration with the local branches of Oman Chamber of Commerce and industries. In all these seminars, an enthusiastic participation from the government officials, CEO's and representatives of Omani companies and Indian companies operating in Oman was seen.

Ambassador updated the audience on the recent growth in bilateral commercial relations between India and Oman. He also briefed on the recent developments and growing trend in the Indian Economy. Highlighting the export potential of Indian products worldwide, he stated that the gems and jewellery, RMG cotton, accessories, cotton yarn, fabrics, make-up, drugs, pharmaceuticals and special chemicals, petroleum crude and products, machinery and instruments, manufacturer of metals, primary and semi-finished iron and steel products, marine products, manmade yarn fabrics, made ups, transport equipment, plastics and linoleum products, electronics goods, inorganic / organic chemical, iron ore, rice, non basmati rice are the main item of exports from India.

Citing the examples of food, pharmaceuticals and ceramics, the Ambassador stated that these sectors have the potential to become engines of growth in our bilateral commercial exchange. Ambassador Wadhwa said, "Oman has a sizable market for Indian food products such as spices, food grains, fruits, fruit pulp, fruit nuts, rice, basmati rice, etc. The Sultanate's effort to diversify its economy will provide a chance to this sector to develop as a primary-sector industry in Oman. In this connection, setting up joint trading companies would be feasible for both, the importer and exporter. In 2008 Oman imported food products worth US \$ 1.991 million against US\$ 1.2 million in 2007 and US\$ 1.04 million in 2006 from India. According to the latest available figures, export of Indian food products, worldwide, were registered at US\$ 193 million in 2008 against US\$ 197.3 million 2007 and US\$ 193.8 million in 2006. On the other hand, overall Omani imports in this sector have increased gradually during this period; US\$ 138.56 million in 2008, US\$ 101.48 million in 2007 and US\$ 75.56 million in 2006. Therefore, there is a great possibility of increasing bilateral cooperation in this sector."

"It is a well-known fact that India is a preferable destination for medical tourism due to India's technically advanced, quick and cost effective hospitals. The effectiveness of Indian pharmaceutical products is also well-known. According to the latest available figures, export of Indian pharmaceutical products, worldwide, were registered at US\$ 5 billion in 2008 against US\$ 3.8 billion in 2007. Indian exports to Oman in this sector were US\$ 9.78 million in 2008 as compared to US\$ 6.13 million in 2007 and 5.204 million in 2006. Thus, Oman imports 1% of India's total pharmaceutical exports, according to 2008 figures. Total Omani import of pharmaceutical products was US\$ 177 million in 2008, US\$ 133 million in 2007 and US\$ 110 million in 2006. Indian generic drugs will be a cost cutting option in contributing to the budding medical system in Oman. If Indian generic drugs enter into the Omani pharmaceutical market, it will surely reduce the medical treatment cost without compromising the quality of medicines," he added.

Exploring the trade potential between the countries, Ambassador explained, "Another area, which has lot of potential in increasing the business between India and Oman is the ceramics industry. The demand for ceramic tiles in the whole GCC region is expected to grow at 15-20%

annually, while production capacity has seen a growth of merely 5-8%. In this connection, India's proximity to the Sultanate and expertise in tiles and ceramic industrial products could be bonus for the trade between India and Oman in this sector. In this industrial segment, the total trade between the two countries was registered US \$ 4.03 million against US \$ 3.6 million in 2007 and US \$ 1.7 million in 2006. India's total export of ceramics and related products was US \$ 214 million in 2008 and US \$ 184 million in 2007. On the other hand, ceramic products worth of US \$ 114.29 million in 2008 and 106 million in 2007 were imported by Oman. Thus, India has just 4% of the market size of the ceramic products."

On the sidelines of these seminars, Ambassador met members of the Indian community and office bearers of Indian Schools. During his visit to Sur, Ambassador donated 200 books to the library of Indian School Sur. He also met the local authorities in various places, especially members of local branches of Oman Chambers of Commerce & Industries (OCCI).

Source: Indian Embassy, Sultanate of Oman.

<http://www.indemb-oman.org/What's-new-India-Oman%20Business%20Seminars.asp>

7. Visit of Minister of Defence to the Sultanate of Oman, 10 May 2010

A. K. Antony, Minister of Defence, Republic of India will pay an official visit to the Sultanate of Oman from May 17-19, 2010, as part of the high-level bilateral interactions between the two countries.

The main purpose of the visit is to exchange views on further strengthening of our bilateral relations with the Sultanate of Oman. During the visit, the Hon'ble Minister of Defence will call on several Omani dignitaries and will hold consultations on bilateral and regional issues of mutual interest.

Source: Indian Embassy, Sultanate of Oman, <http://www.indemb-oman.org/What's-new-PRdefminister.asp>

8. Antony to go on a Two-Day Visit to Oman, 14 May 2010

The Defence Minister A. K. Antony leaves New Delhi on Monday, May 17, 2010 on a two-day official visit to Oman. During his stay in Muscat, Antony will hold wide-ranging talks with his Oman counterpart, Sayyid Badr bin Saud bin Harib Al Busaidi to promote military cooperation. Antony is accompanied by a high-level delegation including the Defence Secretary Pradeep Kumar.

Antony will also hold talks with the top leadership of the Sultanate of Oman and meet the Indian community members working there.

India and Oman have a vibrant military cooperation. In October last year Jaguar fighter jets of the Indian Air Force flew to Oman to participate in the first joint air exercise with the Royal Air Force of Oman. Following the signing of a protocol agreement on military relations between India and Oman in 1972, the last decade has seen an increase of military relations between India and Oman.

Presently a two-tier arrangement for defence cooperation, JMCC and Air Force-to-Air Force Staff Talks (AFST), exists with Oman.

Source: Ministry of Defence Press Release, Press Information Bureau, New Delhi

<http://www.pib.nic.in/release/release.asp?relid=61840>

9. India and Oman to Step up Cooperation in Maritime Security, 18 May 2010

Taking their defence cooperation a step higher, India and Oman have agreed to accelerate their cooperation in maritime security and regional security issues. The decisions were taken at the bilateral discussions between the visiting Defence Minister A. K. Antony and his Oman counterpart Sayyid Badr bin Saud bin Harib Al Busaidi at Muscat today. This is the first ever visit of Antony to West Asia. Speaking at the meeting, he said maritime security is one of the issues that are causing concern to countries around the world. Antony said, after the Mumbai terror attacks in November 2008, issues of maritime security have emerged as a major aspect of India's security concerns. "Maritime security has also become a global concern due to the pirate attacks in the Gulf of Aden. Piracy off the coast of Somalia has been growing over the years and has now assumed alarming proportions", he said.

Giving details of the measures taken by New Delhi, Antony said, to protect Indian flag ships and Indian citizens employed in sea-faring duties, Indian Navy had commenced anti-piracy patrols in the Gulf of Aden from October 2008. A total of 16 Indian navy ships have been deployed in the Gulf of Aden since. In addition to escorting Indian flag ships, ships of other flags have also been escorted. "We are cooperating with other navies deployed in this area by way of information sharing and have been participating in the Shared Awareness and De-Confliction (SHADE) Meetings since April 2009", he said.

The two sides also discussed a number of issues, bilateral and regional. Referring to Afghanistan, Antony said, "we have a common aim in Afghanistan and that is to ensure that it does not become a base of safe haven for terrorists again. We want a stable, moderate, unified and democratic Afghanistan". He said New Delhi's efforts in Afghanistan are focussed on economic and social development activities. "We intend to continue such activities even though we have lost personnel and have suffered attacks on our embassy in Kabul".

Antony expressed satisfaction at the existing defence cooperation between the two countries which is characterised by high level visit exchanges, training, regular bilateral exercises between the two navies and ship visits. In this connection, he recalled the first ever air exercise 'Eastern Bridge' in October 2009. Royal Air Force of Oman pilots have attended the Jaguar Simulator training in India in the past and similar training is planned this year also. "We have laid the foundation and should now work towards adding more content to our defence cooperation", he said.

Antony invited his counterpart to attend Aero-India in February 2011.

The delegation of Antony included the defence secretary Pradeep Kumar, Indian Ambassador to Oman Anil Wadhwa, CISC (Chief of Integrated Staff to the Chair Chiefs of Staff Committee) Air Marshal S. C. Mukul, DGMF (Director General Mechanised Force) Lt. Gen. Dalip Bhardwaj, Air Marshal A Raha and Rear Admiral L. V. S. Babu.

Antony also called on the Sultan of Oman who is also the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces and the Prime Minister of the country, Qaboos bin Said bin Thaimour Al Said.

Last evening, shortly after his arrival in Muscat, Antony attended a dinner hosted for prominent members of Indian Community by the Ambassador. Oman is now home to nearly half a million expatriate Indians. Speaking at the function, Antony said his visit will consolidate further the existing ties between India and Oman. He said India will expand its cooperation with Oman in all fields.

Answering a query from the audience, Antony said the desire of the Indian Army to induct 124 more MBT (Main Battle Tank) Arjun in its armoury was its own after the comparative trials. He expressed happiness that after many years MBT has become a reality and said 'it has come of age'. DGMF Lt. Gen. Dalip Bhardwaj, who was also at the reception, endorsed the views of Antony.

Source: Ministry of Defence Press Release, Press Information Bureau, New Delhi

<http://www.pib.nic.in/release/release.asp?relid=61916>

10. Minister of Defence, A. K. Antony visits Sultanate of Oman from 17-19 May 2010, 18 May 2010

A.K. Antony, Minister of Defence, Government of India, arrived in Muscat yesterday evening 17 May, 2010 within the framework of strengthening and enhancing already existing friendly bilateral relations between India and the Sultanate.

Today, on 18th May, 2010, the Defence Minister along with his delegation was received by His Majesty the Sultan Qaboos bin Said Al Said at Bait Al Baraka. The discussions held between His Majesty the Sultan and the Indian Minister covered all spheres of bilateral relations, including defence cooperation between the two countries. The Minister was warmly received by H. E. Sayyid Badr bin Saud bin Hareb Al Busaidi, Minister of Defence, Sultanate of Oman and discussed various regional issues of mutual interest. The two sides also reviewed ongoing defence cooperation between India and the Sultanate. The Minister also called on H.E. General Ali bin Majid Al Ma'amari, Minister of Royal Palace.

Prior to the arrival of the Defence Minister, a senior level defence delegation headed by Pradeep Kumar, Defence Secretary, Government of India, arrived in Muscat on 16th May 2010 for Joint Defence Meeting between India and Oman. The Omani side was led by H. E. Mohammed bin Nassir bin Mohammed Al Rasbi, Under Secretary in the Omani Ministry of Defence. The two sides discussed various issues of mutual interest, including ways to strengthen strategic partnership between India and Oman to combat piracy in the region and terrorism.

On 19th April, 2010, the Minister will meet His Highness Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmoud Al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for the Council of Ministers, and H. E. Dr. Omar bin Abdul Munim Al Zawawi, Special Adviser to H.M. the Sultan for External Liaison.

In honour of the visiting Defence Minister, Ambassador of India to the Sultanate H. E. Anil Wadhwa hosted a dinner for Indian community on 17th May, 2010. In his address to the gathering, the Minister stated that cultural ties between India and Oman are historic and poised to achieve greater heights. He also hailed the cooperation between the business communities of the two countries. Welcoming the Minister, Ambassador Wadhwa said that several high level visits have taken place between the two countries in the last couple of years within the framework of enhancing and strengthening bilateral relations in all fields.

On 18th May, 2010, the Defence Minister also addressed the office bearers of prominent social groups from Kerala in the Sultanate. Later in the evening Ambassador Anil Wadhwa hosted an official dinner in honour of the two delegations. H. E. Dr. Omar bin Abdul Munim Al Zawawi Adviser to H.M. the Sultan for External Liaison, H. E. Sayyid Badr bin Saud bin Hareb Al Busaidi, Minister of Defence and Mohammed bin Nassir bin Mohammed Al Rasbi, Under Secretary, Ministry of Defence were among other dignitaries who graced the evening.

Source: Indian Embassy, Sultanate of Oman, <http://www.indemb-oman.org/What's-new-defmin.asp>

e. Palestine

11. Joint Communiqué of the Ministers of IBSA on the Situation in the Middle East, 15 April 2010

On the occasion of the Fourth IBSA Summit, in Brasilia, on April 15th 2010, the Ministers of Brazil, India and South Africa met with the Palestinian Foreign Minister Riad Malki.

2. The Ministers indicated that India, Brazil and South Africa, as members of the IBSA Forum, are convinced that a comprehensive peace in the Middle East is crucial, not only for the peoples and countries of the region, but also for the international peace and security.

3. In line with the relevant UN Resolutions, the Madrid principles, the Road Map and the Arab Peace Initiative, the IBSA countries call for the urgent resumption of negotiations that will lead to a two-state solution, with the creation of a sovereign, democratic, independent, united and viable Palestinian State, coexisting peacefully alongside Israel, within secure, pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

4. They note that a comprehensive Arab-Israeli peace process, including between Israel and Palestine, must reach concrete progress on all tracks and reiterate their support to efforts aimed at reactivating talks between Israel, Syria and Lebanon. An enlarged participation of the international community in this endeavour, including developing countries with good relations with all parties, could bring a fresh perspective to the peace process, and IBSA countries will actively support this process.

5. The IBSA countries strongly urge the Israeli government to freeze all settlement activity in the occupied Palestinian territories, including “natural growth”, and to reverse its decision to advance planning for new housing units in East Jerusalem. Concerned by the continuing deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Gaza, they also call on Israel to alleviate circulation restrictions on the movement of people and goods, both in Gaza and in the West Bank. In addition, they expressed deep concern at the issuance by Israel of Military Order 1650.

6. Conflicts in the Middle East remain essentially political in nature and cannot be resolved by force. The IBSA countries therefore call upon all actors not to pursue policies, measures and actions that inflict damage and suffering, particularly to civilians.

7. They express support for mediation efforts with a view to reaching domestic Palestinian reconciliation and urge all interested parties to contribute to that purpose. They call on the international community to contribute, on a sustained, concrete and urgent basis, to the state-building efforts undertaken by the Palestinian National Authority, recalling the IBSA readiness to continue its commitments in this regard.

8. IBSA countries will continue consultations on the matter.

Source: Representative Office of India, Ramallah (uploaded on 7 May 2010),
<http://www.roi-ramallah.org.ps/2010/download/IBSA%20Press%20Release.pdf>

12. Statement on incident involving boats carrying supplies for Gaza, 31 May 2010

India deplores the tragic loss of life and the reports of killings and injuries to people on the boats carrying supplies for Gaza. There can be no justification for such indiscriminate use of force, which we condemn. We extend our sympathies to the families of the dead and wounded. It is our firm conviction that lasting peace and security in the region can be achieved only through peaceful dialogue and not through use of force.

Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi.
<http://meaindia.nic.in/pressrelease/2010/05/31pr01.htm>

f. Syria

13. Joint Working Group meeting on Tourism Between India and Syria takes Place in New Delhi, 11 May 2010

In accordance with the Agreement on tourism cooperation signed between the Government of the Republic of India and the Syrian Arab Republic on October 08, 1991, the first Joint Working Group Meeting on Tourism between India and Syria was held in New Delhi on May 11, 2010.

The Indian delegation was led by Devesh Chaturvedi, Additional Director General (Tourism), Government of India and the Syrian delegation was headed by Bassam Barsik, Director of Tourism Marketing and Development, Government of the Syrian Arab Republic.

In his opening remarks, the Head of the Indian Delegation, Chaturvedi extended cordial welcome to Bassam Barsik, Director of Tourism Marketing and Development, Government of the Syrian Arab Republic and the members of the Syrian Delegation. He highlighted that it is time for both the countries to identify areas of cooperation and explore new opportunities especially in the field of research and development, education and training, promotion, investment, private sector cooperation, and any other forms of cooperation mutually agreed upon by the parties. He also mentioned that the meeting would be useful in enhancing tourism cooperation between the two countries.

The Head of Syrian Delegation, Bassam Barsik, Director Tourism Marketing and Development, Government of the Syrian Arab Republic expressed his sincere thanks to the Indian side for the warm welcome and hospitality extended to them. He also appreciated the friendly relations between the two countries and emphasized the importance of pursuing a closer relationship based on the existing potentials in the tourism sectors in the two countries.

By way of introduction, both sides exchanged views on the economic, social and political importance of tourism for their respective countries and expressed the need for strengthening the cooperation in the field of tourism.

Both the delegations gave an overview of the 'Tourism Sector' in their respective countries and underlined its potential for employment and growth. It was viewed by both sides that increase in the flow of tourists would further enhance bilateral relations between India and Syria and also provide impetus to the growth of the tourism sector in their respective countries.

The Meeting emphasized the need to exchange visits of tour operators and travel media to promote tourism between the two countries. The importance of interaction between the private tourism stakeholders of the two countries was stressed to develop better understanding of the tourism products in each other's country. Both sides believed that growing opportunities in tourism sector should be showcased to attract investments from the private stakeholders of the two countries.

Both sides exchanged views for establishing mechanism to encourage exchange of information related to tourism resources, tourist arrivals to understand the dynamics of tourism sector in each other's country and provide an opportunity to share experiences.

Both sides agreed to have bilateral exchange of information and list of travel agencies, fairs and tourism related events so as to enable enhanced participation and cooperation from both sides.

The Syrian side was briefed on the facilities available in India for Human Resource Development in travel and hospitality sector. It was agreed by both sides to enhance co-operation by developing partnership programmes between leading academic institutions in tourism sector of both countries.

Both sides agreed to exchange of visits of chefs and trainers in field of kitchen and hospitality services.

The Syrian side agreed to exchange knowledge and best practices regarding affiliation and certification system concerning the hospitality courses especially with reputed institutions in United Kingdom, Switzerland etc.

The information on tourism products of India such as Rural Tourism, Wellness & Medical Tourism, Adventure Tourism, the facilities for MICE (Meetings Incentives Conferences and Exhibitions) and luxury trains like Palace on Wheels, Royal Rajasthan on Wheels, Maharaja Express and Deccan Odyssey available in India was also shared with the Syrian side.

Both sides exchanged views about the investment opportunities in the tourism sector in India. Both sides expressed willingness to assist the National Tourism Organisations /Tourism Boards of each other's country in carrying out promotion and marketing activities to increase the tourist traffic between the two countries.

Both sides agreed to take forward, through diplomatic channels, the signing of Executive Programme between India and Syria for co-operation in Tourism.

Both sides agreed that the next Joint Working Group Meeting on Tourism between the Government of the Republic of India and the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic would be held in Syria. The date for holding the same would be decided through diplomatic channels as per mutual convenience.

Source: Ministry of Tourism Press Release, Press Information Bureau, New Delhi
<http://www.pib.nic.in/release/release.asp?relid=61759>

g. Tunisia

14. Parampreet Singh Randhawa appointed as the next Ambassador of India to the Republic of Tunisia, 7 May 2010

Parampreet Singh Randhawa, presently High Commissioner of India to Kenya, has been appointed as the next Ambassador of India to the Republic of Tunisia in succession to Basant K. Gupta.

He is expected to take up his assignment shortly.

Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi
<http://meaindia.nic.in/pressrelease/2010/05/07pr01.htm>

h. United Arab Emirates

15. Impact of Dubai Debt Crisis on Indian Exports, 5 May 2010

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

- (a): whether it is a fact that there is an apprehension of negative impact of the Dubai debt crisis on Indian export and economy;
- (b): if so, the details thereof;
- (c): if not, the reasons therefore; and
- (d): the steps Government is going to take to save Indian export and economy from the impact of Dubai debt crisis?

Answer: The Minister of State in the Ministry of Commerce and Industry (Jyotiraditya M. Scindia):

(a) to (d): No, Sir, there is no noticeable negative impact of the Dubai debt crisis on Indian export and economy. Dubai World, the flagship holding economy of the Dubai Government with active participation in some large real estate projects, sought a debt restructuring and six-month standstill in its debt repayment (estimated at US\$ 59 billion as of August 2009) on November 25, 2009. Although there was initial reaction in the domestic foreign currency and Indian stock markets, the impact was insignificant and short-lived. The primary capital market remained unaffected and there was no visible effect of the Dubai news on the money and government securities markets. Subsequent developments indicate that the impact of the Dubai crisis on financial markets around the world has been contained, following the announcement by the UAE central bank that it would stand behind UAE banks and branches of foreign banks operating in the UAE. Further, the Government of Abu Dhabi and the UAE central bank agreed to provide financial support to Dubai World. The Government of Abu Dhabi has agreed to grant US\$10 billion to Dubai Financial Support Fund for meeting a series of upcoming obligations of Dubai World including *sukuk* (Islamic bond) obligations of US\$ 4.1 billion, which fell due on 14 December 2009. These assurances of trade creditors and contractors have provided confidence to the financial markets.

Source: Rajya Sabha (Council of States), Unstarred Question No. 4307 asked by Prabhat Jha, <http://164.100.47.5/qsearch/QResult.aspx>

Miscellaneous

16. 37th Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) Foreign Ministers Meeting held at Dushanbe, 26 May 2010

We note with regret that the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers has once again chosen to comment upon Jammu and Kashmir and India's internal affairs in the Resolutions adopted by the Organisation of Islamic Conferences Foreign Ministers at then 37th session held at Dushanbe during May 18-20, 2010. Jammu and Kashmir is an integral part of India and the OIC has no *locus standi* in matters concerning India's internal affairs. We reject all such references/resolutions.

Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi.

<http://meaindia.nic.in/pressrelease/2010/05/26pr03.htm>

Notes:

Lok Sabha = House of the People, Lower House of Indian Parliament

Rajya Sabha = Council of States or Upper House of Indian Parliament.

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