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By
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Bilateral

a. Egypt

1. India holds Foreign Office Consultations with Egypt and Political Consultations with the Arab League, 4 August 2010

The 8th session of the India-Egypt Foreign Office Consultations is scheduled to be held on the 5 August 2010. H.E. Vijaya Latha Reddy, Vice Minister in the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India will lead the Indian delegation. The Egyptian delegation will be led by H.E. Ahmed Fathalla, Assistant Foreign Minister for Asian Affairs in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Egypt. The consultations will review the entire gamut of bilateral relations and discuss means of strengthening cooperation in various fields. During her visit, H.E. Ms. Reddy is also expected to meet H.E. Ahmed Aboul Gheit, Foreign Minister of the Arab Republic of Egypt. H.E. Vijaya Latha Reddy will also hold the 5th round of the India-Arab League Political Consultations on 8 August 2010. The Arab League delegation will be led by H.E. Hesham Youssef, Chief of the Cabinet of Arab League Secretary General. The consultations will review the institutional mechanisms to strengthen ties between India and the Arab States. During the visit, H.E. Reddy is also expected to meet H. E. Amr Moussa, Secretary General of the League of Arab States.

Source: Indian Embassy, Cairo, Egypt

<http://www.indembcairo.com/Web%20Pages/Archives%20Eng%202010/Aug%2004.htm>

2. Visit of H.E. Vijaya Latha Reddy, Vice Minister, Ministry of External Affairs of India, 5 August 2010

The 8th session of the India-Egypt Foreign Office Consultations was held in Cairo on 5 August 2010. The Indian delegation to the talks was led by H.E. Vijaya Latha Reddy, Vice Minister in the Ministry of External Affairs of India. The Egyptian delegation was led by H.E. Ambassador Ahmed Amin Fathalla, Assistant Foreign Minister for Asian Affairs in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Egypt.

H.E. Vijaya Latha Reddy noted that India and Egypt shared similar views on international issues and the approaches of the two countries were characterised by mutual understanding and respect for each other's positions. Both sides underlined the priority assigned to the India-Egypt relations, in the bilateral context as well as in multilateral fora. Both sides discussed the preparations of the forthcoming 6th round of India-Egypt Joint Commission Meeting that is scheduled to be held in Cairo in September 2010. Views were also exchanged on regional and international issues of common interest.

The leaders of the two delegations recalled the historic and traditionally friendly ties between India and Egypt and reaffirmed the priority assigned to the further strengthening of the bilateral relations. Both sides noted with happiness that Egypt and India have been able to overcome the global financial crisis and the economies of both countries are expected to grow further. Welcoming the increase in bilateral trade and investment, both sides agreed that necessary assistance should be extended at the official level to Indian and Egyptian businessmen and investors to sustain this positive trend. Bilateral trade between India and Egypt has increased from US\$ 446 million in 2000-01 to more than US\$ 2.7 billion in 2009-10. Indian investments in Egypt, primarily from the Indian private sector, have reached US\$ 2 billion and several Indian companies are actively evaluating further investment opportunities in Egypt.

The Foreign Office Consultations also reviewed bilateral cooperation in the fields of agriculture, energy, science and technology, and culture. It was agreed that these areas of cooperation would continue to receive importance. The strengthening of cooperation in the IT sector and tourism and sharing of experience and expertise in administrative development and reforms was also emphasised.

A meeting also took place on 5 August 2010 between H.E. Vijaya Latha Reddy and H.E. Soliman Awad, Secretary to H.E. the President and Spokesperson, The Presidency, Arab Republic of Egypt.

Source: Indian Embassy, Cairo, Egypt

<http://www.indembaicao.com/Web%20Pages/Archives%20Eng%202010/Aug%2005.htm>

3. Visit of H.E. Vijaya Latha Reddy, Vice Minister, Ministry of External Affairs of India, 8 August 2010

The 5th round of the India-Arab League Political Consultations was held in Cairo on 8 August 2010. The Indian delegation to the talks was led by H.E. Vijaya Latha Reddy, Vice Minister in the Ministry of External Affairs of India. The Arab League delegation was led by H.E. Ambassador Hesham Youssef, Chief of the Cabinet of Arab League Secretary General.

H.E. Vijaya Latha Reddy noted that India's institutionalised ties with Arab League have further strengthened India's relations with Arab countries and recalled the exchanges that have taken place between India and Arab League in recent years. H.E. Ambassador Youssef briefed the India delegation about the situation in the Middle East and Northern Africa. Views were exchanged on regional and international issues of common interest. It was agreed that regular consultations would continue between the Indian side and the League of Arab States.

The leaders of the two delegations affirmed that strong economic and commercial relations formed the foundations of India-Arab relations. Events like the 2nd India-Arab Investment Projects Conclave held in New Delhi in February 2010 have strengthened the relations further. Functioning of the Arab-India Co-operation Forum (AICF), established in 2008, was reviewed. The effect of global economic meltdown on Indian and Arab economies was also discussed. Bilateral trade between India and Arab world was more than US\$ 110 billion in 2009. The two sides agreed to further increase the scale of economic and commercial cooperation between India and the Arab world.

Both sides underlined the traditionally strong cultural links between India and the Arab nations. Activities like the regular celebration of India Arab Cultural Weeks and the organisation of a seminar on Mahatma Gandhi at the Arab League premises in October 2009 were recalled. The preparations for the forthcoming India Arab Cultural Week to be organised in Egypt in the first quarter of 2011 were reviewed. The two sides affirmed to further strengthen the cultural ties between India and the Arab world.

During her visit, H.E. Vijaya Latha Reddy called on H.E. Amr Moussa, Secretary General of the Arab League. H.E. Vijaya Latha Reddy noted that India's historical relations with Arab countries have been further strengthened on the basis of our shared belief in anti-colonialism and South-South cooperation. Views were also exchanged on regional and international issues of common interest.

H.E. Vijaya Latha visited the renowned Bibliotheca Alexandrina at Alexandria on 7 August 2010 and gifted a set of books on and by Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore, including a facsimile copy of the original manuscript of '*Gitanjali*' to the library, to mark the forthcoming 150th birth anniversary of Tagore which begins in 2011.

During her visit, H.E. Vijaya Latha Reddy called on H.E. Ahmed Aboul Gheit, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Egypt. Preparations of the forthcoming Joint Commission Meeting were reviewed. Foreign Minister Gheit underlined the importance of regular consultations and strengthening of relations. H.E. Reddy emphasised the stabilising role of Egypt in the Middle East and also praised its leadership of NAM. Views were also exchanged on important regional and international issues.

Source: Indian Embassy, Cairo, Egypt

<http://www.indembcairo.com/Web%20Pages/Archives%20Eng%202010/Aug%2008.htm>

4. External Affairs Minister of India and the Egyptian Minister of Communications and Information Technology jointly inaugurate the Pan African E-Network Project in Egypt, 16 August 2010

Hon'ble External Affairs Minister of India, H.E. S. M. Krishna and Hon'ble Minister of Communications and Information Technology of Arab Republic of Egypt, H.E. Dr. Tarek Kamel jointly inaugurated the Pan African E-Network Project on Monday 16 August 2010 by conducting a video-conference through a video link between New Delhi and Cairo via the E-Learning Centre in Alexandria.

An E-learning Centre has been operational since July 2009 at Alexandria University under the Pan African e-Network Project (a fibre-optic network to provide satellite connectivity, tele-medicine and tele-education to all 53 nations of the African Union). The Tele-medicine Centre under the Project has also become operational at Suzanne Mubarak Regional Centre for Women's Health and Development.

Conveying his greetings to H.E. Tarek Kamel, Minister for Communications and Information Technology, President Hosni Mubarak, Foreign Minister Abul Gheit and the people of Egypt, the Indian Minister stressed that India and Egypt being two great civilizations have benefited from cultural and scientific exchange for thousands of years. Emphasising the utmost importance that India attaches to its relations with the African nations, the Minister informed that the Project aims at providing tele-education services to 10,000 African students to undertake Post-Graduate as well as Under-Graduate and other courses in numerous disciplines. The project also offers online medical consultation in various medical disciplines. Seven Universities and twelve leading Indian Super Specialty Hospitals have been associated with the Project. It is noteworthy that in a few months' time, Alexandria University will serve as regional centre for the entire North African region both for e-learning and tele-medicine.

Expressing his happiness that Egypt is among the most active countries in utilizing the opportunities provided by the Pan-African E-Network, the Indian Minister affirmed his confidence that these interactions will further increase in future.

In Cairo, the video-conference was held at the office of the Minister of Communications and Information Technology, H.E. Dr. Tarek Kamel, who, speaking on the occasion, thanked the Government of India for its assistance and informed that the Project had aroused much interest in Egypt, which was evident from the fact that in a span of eight months, 3,700 Egyptian doctors have interacted with their counterparts in India. Already, 43 Egyptian students are taking MBA courses from the Indira Gandhi National Open University.

The Egyptian Minister said that he would look forward to the visit of the Indian Minister in September and invited him to Alexandria during his visit to formally inaugurate the project there.

Recently, the European Institute of Creative Strategies and Innovation, a think-tank centre for research, expertise, reflection and for methodological support for strategies for innovation and renewal in Europe and worldwide, awarded the Pan African e-Network Project with ‘The Hermes Prize for Innovation 2010’ for its contribution in the field of Sustainable Human Development with the citation that this “e-network is the most ambitious program of distance education and tele-medicine in Africa ever undertaken.”

Source: Indian Embassy, Cairo, Egypt

<http://www.indembcairo.com/Web%20Pages/Archives%20Eng%202010/Aug%2016.htm>

b. Iran

5. Indo-Iran Relationship, 4 August 2010

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

- (a) the stand of India towards Iran in the wake of sanctions by US and other western countries against Iran; and
- (b) the steps being taken to strengthen and improve our relations with Iran?

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

(a): Government is aware of certain unilateral sanctions imposed by US and other Western countries on the Iran nuclear issue. The UN Security Council also passed UNSC Resolution 1929 on the same issue. On the Iran nuclear issue, India’s consistent position has been that Iran has a right to develop peaceful use of nuclear energy while fulfilling all its obligations and commitments. The Iran nuclear issue should be resolved through peaceful diplomacy, and the frame work of the IAEA provides the best forum to address technical aspects of the issue.

(b): India and Iran share civilizational and historical ties which underpin a rich and multi-faceted contemporary relationship strengthened by regular interactions, both official and non-official. There have been regular high-level exchanges including consultations at Ministerial level to discuss bilateral relations and issues of regional and global importance. Meetings of the Joint

Commission and Joint Working Groups and exchange of delegations have been held to promote economic and commercial cooperation, cultural and educational ties and address consular matters. The interactions of academic and research institutions as also of chambers of commerce and industry and commercial entities have been facilitated. These include the organization of bilateral seminars, meetings and exchange of visits and promotional events.

Source: Lok Sabha (House of the People), Unstarred Question No. 1821 asked by C. R. Patil

<http://164.100.47.132/LssNew/psearch/QResult15.aspx?qref=90112>

6. Visit of Deputy Foreign Minister of Iran, 6 August 2010

At the invitation of Nirupama Rao, Foreign Secretary, Deputy Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran H.E. Dr. Mohammad Ali Fathollahi visited India for Foreign Office Consultations, held on August 6, 2010. The visit was part of the series of regular Foreign Office Consultations between the two countries.

The two sides discussed a wide range of bilateral, regional and multilateral issues of mutual interest, covering, inter alia, bilateral cooperation, the regional situation including Afghanistan, and the menace of cross-border terrorism. During the visit, the Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister called on Hon'ble External Affairs Minister.

Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi

<http://meaindia.nic.in/pressrelease/2010/08/06pr01.htm>

7. IPI Gas Pipeline, 11 August 2010

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

- (a) the present status of India-Pakistan-Iran Gas Pipeline Project;
- (b) whether India has expressed its concerns over the cost and security of the Project;
- (c) if so, the details thereof and the reactions of the other stakeholders thereto;
- (d) whether Iran and Pakistan have signed the contract on the said gas pipeline;
- (e) if so, the details thereof;
- (f) whether any fresh initiatives have been taken either by Iran or India to hold technical talks in this regard; and
- (g) if so, the details thereof including India's reservations in this regard?

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

(a) to (c): India has been involved in discussions on the IPI pipeline project. Among the issues that have been focused upon relating to the pipeline project are those relating to pricing, transit fee and transportation tariff, point of delivery, project structure and security of the pipeline. 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.

(d) & (e): We have seen media reports to the effect that Iran and Pakistan signed on 16 March 2010 in Istanbul, Turkey the Heads of Agreement (HOA) and Operational Agreement that would pave way for construction of a gas pipeline from Iran to Pakistan. Under the agreement, Iran is to supply 750 million cubic feet gas per day from its South Pars field to Pakistan for 25 years beginning 2015. Subsequently, officials of both countries signed the sovereign guarantee agreement on 28 May 2010 in Islamabad. Media reports further indicated that the Heads of Agreement contained provision for transporting Indian gas volume through the Pakistani territory if and when India decides to join the project. According to the reports, Pakistan will have the right to charge transit fee in return for safe transit of Indian gas volume.

(f) & (g): India and Iran have agreed for an early meeting of the India-Iran bilateral Joint Working Group on Oil and Gas, which discusses bilateral cooperation in the energy sector, including the IPI Gas pipeline project.

Source: Lok Sabha (House of the People), Unstarred Question No. 2924 asked by Kaushalendra Kumar

<http://164.100.47.132/LssNew/psearch/QResult15.aspx?qref=91593>

8. UN Sanctions on Iran, 11 August 2010

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

(a) whether the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) has imposed fresh sanctions against Iran over its nuclear programme;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the reaction of the Government thereto;

(c) whether it is a fact that India's interest lies in strengthening relations with Iran and extending economic and trade ties especially in the energy sector; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

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

(a) & (b): Yes, Sir. The UN Security Council imposed fresh sanctions on Iran over its nuclear programme vide resolution 1929 adopted on 9 June 2010. The resolution covers, inter alia, Iran's

nuclear and ballistic missile activities, conventional arms transfers to and from Iran, Iran's shipping and banking sectors and entities related to Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC). The UN Security Council resolutions on Iran have been adopted under Chapter VII of the UN Charter and it is mandatory for all UN members to comply with their provisions.

(c) & (d): Government remains committed to maintaining and further strengthening bilateral relations with Iran, including economic and trade ties and in the energy sector. There have been regular high-level exchanges including consultations at ministerial level between India and Iran to discuss bilateral relations and important regional and global issues. Meetings of the Joint Commission and Joint Working Groups have been held to promote economic and commercial cooperation and cultural and educational ties. Interactions between academic and research institutions as also of Chambers of Commerce and Industry and commercial entities have been facilitated through meetings, seminars, visits and promotional events.

Source: Lok Sabha (House of the People), Starred Question No. 248 asked by Bibhu Prasad Tarai

<http://164.100.47.132/LssNew/psearch/QResult15.aspx?qref=91566>

9. Interview of FS with All India Radio, 12 August 2010

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Interviewer: What about the Iran pipeline? How do we balance our relationship with Iran along the United States?

Foreign Secretary: You are talking about the Iran-Pakistan-India pipeline. Our relations with the United States and our relations with Iran are independent of each other and you should not hyphenate them. As far as the pipeline is concerned, India is very interested in cooperation with Iran including in the oil and gas sector. To put that in context, especially in terms of the import of crude which we require for the growing economy, Iran is an important supplier. Issues of pricing, transit fee, transportation tariff, point of delivery, project structure, and security would apply when it comes to the pipeline. This is a multilateral project. It would naturally involve protracted discussions as all aspects have to be carefully examined and deliberated upon to the satisfaction of the participating countries. So, we are going to discuss this further - the bilateral aspect of this, the India-Iran cooperation in this regard - when we meet within the Joint Working Group on Oil and Gas that we have with Iran, and that is likely to be convened later this year.

Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi

<http://meaindia.nic.in/interview/2010/08/12in01.htm>

10. Joint commission meeting with Iran, 12 August 2010

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

- (a) whether it is a fact that India and Iran has decided to hold a Joint Commission meeting in a bid to firm up economic bonds between the two countries; and
- (b) if so, the details thereof?

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

(a) & (b): Yes. The 16th Session of the India-Iran Joint Commission was held in New Delhi from 8-9 July 2010. The Session was co-chaired on the Iranian side by the Minister for Economic Affairs and Finance, Dr. Seyed Shamseddin Hosseini and on the Indian side by External Affairs Minister S. M. Krishna. The meeting of the Joint Commission provided an opportunity to review bilateral economic and cultural cooperation. It was agreed that the next Session of the Joint Commission would be held in Tehran. The following MoUs/Agreements were signed during the Joint Commission Meeting:

- i. Air Services Agreement; ii. Agreement on Transfer of Sentenced Persons; iii. MoU on Cooperation in New & Renewable Energy; iv. MoU on Cooperation in Small Scale Industry between National Small Industries Corporation (NSIC) and Iranian Small Industries and Industrial Parks Organisation (ISIPO); v. Programme of Cooperation on Science & Technology; (and) vi. MoU on Cooperation between Central Pulp and Paper Research Institute of India (CPPRI) and Gorgan University of Agricultural Science and Natural Resources (GUASNR).

Source: Rajya Sabha (Council of States), Unstarred Question No. 2004 asked by M. P. Achuthan

<http://164.100.47.5/qsearch/QResult.aspx>

11. Indo-Iran Trade Relations, 13 August 2010

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

- (a) whether Iran has offered to sign bilateral investment protection treaty with India and invited Indian corporate to invest in refineries and power plants that are likely to be disinvested;
- (b) if so, whether the visiting Iranian Minister for Economic Affairs and Finance Minister had discussed the prospect for treaty with Indian counterpart;
- (c) if so, whether any agreement in this regard was reached and signed; and

(d) if so, to what extent investment protection treaty with Iran will help both countries to invest in each other country and improve trade between two and to what extent these measures will also help increasing Iran's relations with India?

Answer: The Minister of State in the Ministry of Finance (S. S. Palanimanickam):

(a): Yes, Madam. Both India and Iran have expressed desire to sign the Bilateral Investment Promotion and Protection agreement (BIPA) post completion of legal formalities. As regards investments in Iranian refineries and power plants, some Indian corporates have been taken steps in this regard.

(b) & (c): During a meeting between the Indian Finance Minister and Dr. Seyed Shamsodin Hosseini, Minister of Economic Affairs and Finance, Islamic Republic of Iran, on 8 July 2010 the issue of BIPA between the two countries was discussed. The draft text of the Agreement has been finalised. However, BIPA with Iran has not yet been signed.

(d): The objective of BIPA is to promote and protect the interests of investors of either country in the territory of the other country. Such Agreements increase the comfort level and boost the confidence of the investors by assuring a minimum standard of treatment and non-discrimination in all matters while providing for justiciability (sic) of disputes with the host country. It is perceived that such Agreements serve as a major catalyst for investment flows from India to these countries and vice versa.

Source: Lok Sabha (House of the People), Unstarred Question No. 3366 asked by Supriya Sule

<http://164.100.47.132/LssNew/psearch/QResult15.aspx?qref=91288>

12. IPI Pipeline, 17 August 2010

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

(a) the present stage of trilateral negotiations between Iran, Pakistan and India for importing piped gas into India from Iran via Pakistan;

(b) whether the agreement in this regard recently concluded bilaterally between Iran and Pakistan, facilitates or hinders the eventual trilateralization of the project and the reasons therefore;

(c) whether Government is aware of the objections voiced by US authorities to Pakistan over their agreement with Iran; and

(d) whether such objections have also been voiced to India or are deterring India from pursuing the project more vigorously?

Answer: The Minister of State in the Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas (Jitin Prasada):

(a): 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, payment of transportation tariff and transit fees for passage of natural gas through Pakistan, etc., are under discussion amongst the participating countries.

(b): According to media reports, Heads of Agreement (HoA) and Operational Agreement that would pave the way for construction of a gas pipeline from Iran to Pakistan have been signed between Iran & Pakistan in March 2010. Subsequently, both the countries signed the sovereign guarantee agreement in May 2010 in Islamabad. As informed, the HoA contains provision for transporting Indian gas volume through the Pakistani territory if and when India decides to join the project.

(c): It has been reported that US officials have conveyed to Pakistan the implication of sanctions imposed by United Nations Security Council Resolution No. 1929 of 9 June 2010 and US laws on Projects such as the Iran-Pakistan pipeline agreement.

(d): US officials and others have from time to time drawn the attention of the Government to the implications of sanctions imposed by United Nations Security Council Resolution No. 1929 of 9 June 2010 and US domestic laws on projects, such as the IPI gas pipeline project. However, the Government is pursuing the import of natural gas from Iran in national interest in order to enhance the energy security of the country.

Source: Rajya Sabha (Council of States), Unstarred Question No. 2526 asked by Mani Shankar Aiyar

<http://164.100.47.5/qsearch/QResult.aspx>

13. Economic Cooperation with Iran, 18 August 2010

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

(a) whether Iran and India are holding discussions at regular intervals on issues relating to economic co-operation under the aegis of the Joint Commission mechanism which was established in 1983;

(b) if so, the details thereof?

(c) whether the 16th Session of this Joint Commission mechanism was held recently in New Delhi;

(d) if so, the details of discussions held between the two countries;

(e) whether India gives due importance to Iran particularly to meet its energy security; and

(f) if so, the details thereof?

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

(a) to (d): Yes. The 16th Session of the India-Iran Joint Commission was held in New Delhi from 8-9 July 2010. The Session was co-chaired on the Iranian side by the Minister for Economic Affairs and Finance, Dr. Seyed Shamseddin Hosseini and on the Indian side by External Affairs Minister S. M. Krishna. The meeting of the Joint Commission provided an opportunity to review bilateral economic and cultural cooperation. It was agreed that the next Session of the Joint Commission would be held in Tehran.

The following MoUs/Agreements were signed during the Joint Commission Meeting:

- i) Air Services Agreement
- ii) Agreement on Transfer of Sentenced Persons
- iii) MoU on Cooperation in New & Renewable Energy
- iv) MoU on Cooperation in Small Scale Industry between National Small Industries Corporation (NSIC) and Iranian Small Industries and Industrial Parks Organisation (ISIPO)
- v) Programme of Cooperation on Science & Technology
- vi) MoU on Cooperation between Central Pulp and Paper Research Institute of India (CPPRI) and Gorgan University of Agricultural Science and Natural Resources (GUASNR)

(e) & (f): Iran is an important source of India's imports of energy resources. Discussions on cooperation in the energy sector are held in the bilateral Joint Working Group on Oil and Gas and other bilateral consultative mechanisms.

Source: Lok Sabha (House of the People), Unstarred Question No. 4076 asked by Gurudas Das Gupta

<http://164.100.47.132/LssNew/psearch/QResult15.aspx?qref=91617>

c. Israel

14. Procurement of Drone Aircraft, 2 August 2010

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

(a) the status of procurement of Drone aircraft from Israel;

- (b) the performance of these aircraft;
- (c) whether the Government also proposes to hold talks with the US for procurement of similar aircraft; and
- (d) if so, the details thereof?

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

- (a): Indian Air Force and Navy have procured Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS) from Israel.
- (b): The performance of these UAS has been satisfactory.
- (c) & (d): There is no proposal at present to hold talks with USA for procurement of similar aircraft.

Source: Lok Sabha (House of the People), Unstarred Question No. 1281 asked by Kunwar Rewati Raman Singh

<http://164.100.47.132/LssNew/psearch/QResult15.aspx?qref=89965>

15. Attack on Flotilla, 4 August 2010

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

- (a) the stand of the Indian Government on the Israel-Palestine issue;
- (b) whether the Government is aware about the UN Resolution 1860 of January 2009 demanding to end the blockade to open Gaza; and
- (c) if so, the steps taken by the Government to settle the contentious issue between the two countries?

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

(a): India's commitment to the Palestinian cause is an important component of our long established foreign policy. We share the perception that the conflict in West Asia is essentially political in nature and cannot be resolved by force. In line with our support for UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, India supports a negotiated solution resulting in a sovereign, independent, viable and united State of Palestine living within secure and recognized borders, side by side at peace with Israel as endorsed in the Quartet Roadmap and UNSC Resolutions 1397 and 1515. India has supported the Arab Peace Plan, which calls for withdrawal of Israel to pre-1967 borders, along with recognition of Israel and the establishment of the State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital.

(b): Yes.

(c): India has called for an early and significant easing of restrictions on the free movement of persons and goods within Palestine. During the visit of President Mahmoud Abbas of Palestine National Authority on 11 February 2010, Prime Minister had reiterated India's commitment to the Palestinian cause and urged concerted action for achieving a durable, just and comprehensive settlement of the Middle East conflict. During the India-Brazil-South Africa Summit (IBSA) in Brasilia, the Ministers of IBSA issued a joint communiqué on 15 April 2010 on the situation in the Middle East that, inter alia, stated that concerned by the continuing deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Gaza, the Ministers called on Israel to alleviate circulation restrictions on the movement of people and goods, both in Gaza and in the West Bank. 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: Lok Sabha (House of the People), Unstarred Question No. 1681 asked by Basudeb Acharia

<http://164.100.47.132/LssNew/psearch/QResult15.aspx?qref=90084>

d. Kuwait

16. India and Kuwait sign a document on Labour Employment and Manpower Development, 18 August 2010

On 17 August 2010, the Ambassador of India, H.E. Ajai Malhotra, and the Under Secretary, Ministry of Social Affairs & Labour, H.E. Mohammed Al-Kandari, signed a document to move forward the process started by the Second Meeting of the Joint Working Group on Labour, Employment and Manpower Development that was held in Kuwait from 13-14 January 2010. It aims to further strengthen bilateral cooperation in employment and manpower development by regulating recruitment in a legal and orderly way. Issues that were discussed address the entire range of concerns of Indian domestic sector and private sector workers in Kuwait. The next Meeting of the Joint Working Group is proposed to be held in November 2010 in New Delhi, India.

Source: Indian Embassy, Kuwait

<http://www.indembkwt.org/press/18aug10-2.htm>

e. UAE

17. Maintenance base in UAE, 10 August 2010

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

(a) whether Air India (AI) is to set up maintenance base in the United Arab Emirates (UAE);

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the details of such base set up by AI in other countries as on date?

Answer: The Minister of State (Independent Charge) of the Ministry of Civil Aviation (Praful Patel):

(a), (b) and (c): Air India does not have any plans to set up a maintenance base in UAE or in any other foreign country. However, Air India has positioned its technical personnel in Dubai, Dammam, Hong Kong, Jeddah, London, New York, Newark and Riyadh for the transit and turn around checks of its aircraft operating through these stations.

Source: Rajya Sabha (Council of States), Unstarred Question No. 1249 asked by Mohammed Ali Khan

<http://164.100.47.5/qsearch/QResult.aspx>

Multilateral

18. Migrant workers in Middle East, 5 August 2010

Question: Will the Minister of Overseas Indian Affairs be pleased to state:

(a) the number of India Migrant labourers that are working in Middle East countries;

(b) whether India has signed bilateral agreement with some countries;

(c) whether migrant workers are also included in this bilateral agreement; and

(d) whether there is any provision for getting the social security money refunded to the workman and facility for transfer of dead body of workers, in case of death?

Answer: The Minister of Overseas Indian Affairs (Vayalar Ravi):

(a): About 5 million Indians are estimated to be working in the Middle East countries. Exact data is not available.

(b): India has signed Labour MoUs with Jordan, Qatar, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Kuwait, Malaysia and Bahrain.

(c): Yes, Sir. Migrant workers in the Gulf are contractual workers and do not contribute to social security.

(d): Repatriation of mortal remains are done as per the Employment Contract. If the dead bodies are not transported by the Employer, Indian Missions organize transportation of the dead body. The Pravasi Bhartiya Bima Yojna covers this expense.

Source: Rajya Sabha (Council of States), Unstarred Question No. 1249 asked by Ramachandra Khuntia

<http://164.100.47.5/qsearch/QResult.aspx>

19. Participation in work by Steel Companies in Foreign Countries, 5 August 2010

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

- (a) the projects in which public sector steel companies have been participating in the foreign countries along with the names of such countries;
- (b) the number of people employed in these projects; and
- (c) the potential in these projects in the coming years?

Answer: The Minister of State in the Ministry of Steel (A. Sai Prathap):

(a): MECON Limited, a Public Sector Undertaking under the administrative control of the Ministry of Steel has been participating in work in foreign countries. The projects during the last 3 years and the names of the countries are given below:

- i) Preparation of Techno-Economic Feasibility Report (TEFR) and Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) report for Rock Phosphate project of GECOPHAM, Syria for Department of Fertilizer, Government of India, New Delhi.
- ii) Preparation of Engineering, Procurement and Construction (EPC) Bid Document for Pumping 150,000 m³/d Water from Desalination Plant at Mocha to Taiz for a distance of 100 kilometres in Yemen for Frimex Gulf Co. (LLC), Dubai, UAE.
- iii) Market Survey and Feasibility Study Report for Assessment & Growth Strategies for Qatar Steel Company.
- iv) Detailed engineering and consultancy services for setting-up a 2.0 million tonnes per annum integrated steel plant and a 550 Mega Watt natural gas power plant in Bolivia, a Latin American country, by Jindal Steel, Bolivia.
- v) Detailed engineering and consultancy services for rectification of Rolling Mill & Power Plant and installation of Steel Melting Shop for Integrated Steel PLC, Oshogbo, Nigeria.
- vi) Detailed engineering and consultancy services for setting-up of 180,000 tonnes per year Structural Rolling Mill in Dubai for Star Steel International, UAE.

vii) Detailed engineering and consultancy services for 360,000 tonnes per year Re-bar Mill in Dubai for Star Steel International, UAE.

viii) Detailed engineering & consultancy services for Heavy Section Mill at Jubail, Saudi Arabia for United Gulf Steel, Saudi Arabia.

ix) Basic Engineering for 1.4 million tonnes per year, Integrated Steel Plant at Bandar Abbas, Iran for Essar Construction Limited, Iran.

(b): Approximately 105 personnel of MECON Ltd. have been involved in these projects.

(c): Overseas exposure will help MECON Ltd. to enhance their experience internationally and contribute to the growth of the company.

Source: Lok Sabha (House of the People), Unstarred Question No. 1852 asked by N Cheluvvaraya Swamy Swamygowda

<http://164.100.47.132/LssNew/psearch/QResult15.aspx?qref=91131>

20. Building of fertilizer capacity in Middle East, 6 August 2010

Question: Will the Minister of Chemicals & Fertilizers be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has received any report/suggestion to consider to build new fertilizer capacity in the Middle East, where gas supplies are abundant and relatively inexpensive; and

(b) If so, Government's response thereto?

Answer: The Minister of State in the Ministry of Chemicals & Fertilizers (Srikant Kumar Jena):

(a) to (b): The various proposals are under discussion in Middle East for exploring the possibility of putting up Ammonia-Urea Fertilizer plant in countries like Oman, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Qatar and Kuwait. The Government is continuously following-up the issue of availability of gas with the competent authorities in the respective nations. However, no country has till now, given confirmation about availability/supply of gas at affordable price.

Source: Rajya Sabha (Council of States), Unstarred Question No. 1367 asked by Sanjay Raut

<http://164.100.47.5/qsearch/QResult.aspx>

21. Indians in jails of Gulf countries, 12 August 2010

Question: Will the Minister of Overseas Indian Affairs be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a number of Indian nationals are languishing in jails and facing trials in various Gulf countries;

- (b) if so, the number of such cases reported;
- (c) whether persons who were victims of job rackets were also among the imprisoned;
- (d) if so, whether Government has taken any steps to help the victims; and
- (e) if so, the details thereof, case-wise?

Answer: The Minister of Overseas Indian Affairs (Vayalar Ravi):

(a) & (b): The Indian Missions in the six Gulf Countries have reported the details of Indian nationals who are presently serving jail sentences in Gulf countries, which is as under:

| | | |
|-------|--------------|------|
| (i) | Oman | 126 |
| (ii) | Bahrain | 91 |
| (iii) | Saudi Arabia | 1226 |
| (iv) | UAE | 1361 |
| (v) | Kuwait | 263 |
| (vi) | Qatar | 28 |

(c) to (e): The Indian Missions in these countries are not aware of any reports about Indian nationals imprisoned as victims of job rackets. However, Consulate/Mission officials periodically visit prisons to ascertain the general welfare of Indian prisoners.

Source: Rajya Sabha (Council of States), Unstarred Question No. 2026 asked by T. K. Rangarajan

<http://164.100.47.5/qsearch/QResult.aspx>

22. Agreement with Gulf Countries, 18 August 2010

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

- (a) whether the Government has entered into agreements with Gulf countries with regard to the strategic and security demands of the country; and
- (b) if so, the details thereof and the major highlights of the agreement?

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

(a) & (b): The Government has entered into agreements with the following Gulf countries with regard to the strategic and security demands of the country:

(i) India and Qatar have signed an Agreement on Cooperation in Security and Law Enforcement as well as an Agreement on Defence Cooperation in November 2008. Both agreements provide for the exchange of information and experts as well as for periodic discussion on issues of mutual interest.

(ii) India and Saudi Arabia signed a MOU in 2006 on Combating Crime which provides for cooperation between the security agencies of the two countries for combating organized crime, including international terrorism, illicit trafficking of narcotics, weapons, and historical artefacts, and counterfeiting of currency and travel documents. An Extradition Treaty was signed in 2010 which aims to strengthen bilateral cooperation against crime by facilitating extradition of accused and convicted individuals. This Treaty needs to be ratified by both sides before it would come into effect.

Source: Lok Sabha (House of the People), Unstarred Question No. 3918 asked by K Sudhakaran

<http://164.100.47.132/LssNew/psearch/QResult15.aspx?qref=91600>

Miscellaneous

23. Accommodation charges for Hajj, 4 August 2010

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

(a) whether the Government is contemplating to increase the accommodation charges for Hajj Pilgrims as reported in the media;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefore;

(c) the details of the estimated financial burden as a result thereof on each pilgrim for performing Hajj Yatra (travel); and

(d) the steps taken/being taken by the Government to exempt poor Hajj Pilgrims from the increased accommodation charges?

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

(a) to (c): The accommodation charges for Hajj pilgrims are fixed and regulated by the Saudi Authorities and the Government of India does not have any role in it. Saudi Authorities have increased the minimum area requirement for Hajj pilgrims from 3.5 square metres to 4 square metres per pilgrim with effect from Hajj– 2010 resulting in proportionate increase in the accommodation charges. The rates effective during Hajj– 2009 and Hajj– 2010 are tabulated below:

| Category | Rental Charge in Saudi Riyal per | Rental Charge in Saudi Riyal per |
|----------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
|----------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|

| | unit fort Hajj- 2009 | unit for Hajj-2010 |
|----------|----------------------|--------------------|
| Green | SR 3500 | SR 4000 |
| White | SR 2800 | SR 3200 |
| Azizziah | SR 2200 | SR 2500 |

(d): Accommodation charges are required to be paid by the pilgrims on the basis of actuals.

Source: Lok Sabha (House of the People), Unstarred Question No. 3918 asked by P. Jaya Prada Nahata

<http://164.100.47.132/LssNew/psearch/QResult15.aspx?qref=90092>

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