



MEI INDIA SPEAKS

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Bilateral Issues

a. Egypt

1. A large delegation of Senior Government of India Officials visits Egypt, Cairo, 12 January 2011

A 44-member delegation of senior government officials from India is visiting Egypt from 11th to 15th January, 2011, to acquaint themselves and learn from various Egyptian authorities about the administrative mechanisms.

The delegation is sponsored by the Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA), a reputed organization under the Ministry of Personnel and Training of the Government of India, which organizes every year a 9-month education-cum-training programme titled “Advanced Professional Programme in Public Administration (APPPA)” for senior government officers. A study tour abroad is an integral component of the programme so that participants get an exposure to systems in foreign countries to ensure efficient and effective delivery of public services, accountability and mechanisms for responding to the people’s needs.

A similar group of senior government officers from India visited last year. Encouraged by the success of the last visit, IIPA is sending another group of senior government officers to Egypt from 12 to 15 January, 2011 with primary focus on Administrative Reforms, Tourism and Heritage Management, Social Sector Initiatives and the role of civil society institutions in Governance.

During the visit, the delegation will be calling on H.E. Dr. Tarek Kamel, Minister of Communication & Information Technology, H.E. Dr. Ahmed Darwish, Minister of Administrative Development, and H.E. Dr. Ali Al Moselhi, Minister of Social Solidarity. The

Indian delegation will also get detailed briefings from senior officials of these Ministries, apart from a presentation on Egyptian tourism sector by Mr. Samy Mahmoud, Head of International Tourism Sector of Egypt.

Source: Embassy of India, Cairo,

<http://www.indembcairo.com/Web%20Pages/Archives%20Eng%202011/Jan%2012%282%29.htm>

2. His Eminence the Grand mufti of Egypt visits India, New Delhi, 12 January 2011

His Eminence, the Grand mufti of Egypt, Dr Ali Gomaa who is currently on a visit to India, met the Hon'ble Vice President Dr. Hamid Ansari, the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, Dr Manmohan Singh, and the Deputy Speaker of the Rajya Sabha, Dr. Rahman Khan on 12 January 2011.

The lunch hosted for His Eminence by the Vice President of India was attended by the Minister of External Affairs, Mr. S. M Krishna and the Minister for Health Mr. Gulam Nabi Azad.

His Eminence, the Grand Mufti who is on a visit to India to participate in the International Islamic Conference in the State of Kerala emphasised the tolerant and peaceful nature of Islam. He is also expected to deliver several lectures in New Delhi.

Source: Embassy of India, Cairo,

<http://www.indembcairo.com/Web%20Pages/Archives%20Eng%202011/Jan%2012%283%29.htm>

3. Indian Minister for New & Renewable Energy visits Egypt with an Indian Business Delegation, Cairo, 24 January 2011

At the invitation of H.E. Dr. Hassan Younes, Minister of Electricity & Energy, the Minister of New & Renewable Energy of India H.E. Dr. Farooq Abdullah visited Egypt from 19th January, 2011 to 23rd January, 2011. He was accompanied by a 12-member strong business delegation consisting of top companies engaged in wind and solar energy fields, such as Suzlon, LANCO Solar, Bharat Forge, Regen Powertech etc. The visit is part of a continuous engagement of the two countries in the field of energy in recent times – the Indian Minister visited Egypt in June 2009, followed by a visit of the Egyptian Minister to India in November 2009.

During the visit, the two Ministers held bilateral discussions to explore further cooperation in the field of new and renewable energy. During the discussions, talking about sharing India's renewable energy expertise with Egypt, the Indian Minister made an offer of training for Egyptian officials at Solar Energy Training Centre in Gurgaon and the Wind Energy Training Centre in Chennai. He also offered to assist Egypt in setting up a solar energy project in a village of Egypt's choice.

Following bilateral consultations, the two Ministers addressed the businessmen from India and Egypt. Presentations were also made by the Under Secretary of Egyptian Ministry of Energy & Electricity and Chairman of Indian Renewable Energy Development Authority of India. The

Indian business delegation met the Egyptian businessmen engaged in the energy sector and held fruitful discussions and one-to-one meetings which are expected to result in concrete business.

On the occasion, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on cooperation in the field of renewable energy sector was signed by the two Ministers. The MoU provides the framework for further cooperation in this sector.

Source: Embassy of India, Cairo,

<http://www.indembcairo.com/Web%20Pages/Archives%20Eng%202011/Jan%2024.htm>

4. Indians safe in Egypt – Control room at Embassy of India, New Delhi, 29 January 2011

The Embassy of India in Cairo is in touch with members of the Indian community, who are reported to be safe. There are about 3600 People of Indian Origin (PIO) in Egypt, of which some 2200 are in Cairo.

2. The Embassy has also set-up a round-the-clock Control Room. The telephone numbers are:

+202 27360556

+202 2736 0052

+202 2735 6168

3. In view of the prevailing situation in Egypt, Indian nationals are advised to avoid non-essential travel to Egypt for the present.

Source: MEA, New Delhi, <http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=530217119>

5. Government arranges special flight for Indian community in Egypt, New Delhi, 30 January 2011

Government has arranged a special Air India flight, at the request of the Indian community in Egypt, in view of the prevailing conditions there. The special flight will carry 300 Indians, mainly women and children, from Cairo to India, today. The arrangements are being supervised by the Indian Embassy in Cairo.

Source: MEA, New Delhi, <http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=530217122>

6. India concerned at developments in Egypt - hopes for peaceful resolution, New Delhi, 30 January 2011

In response to a question the Official Spokesperson said,

“We are closely following with concern, the developments in Egypt. India has traditionally enjoyed close and friendly relations. We hope for an early and peaceful resolution of the situation without further violence and loss of lives.”

Source: MEA, New Delhi, <http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=530317123>

b. Iran

7. Press conference by External Affairs Minister Mr. S M Krishna, New Delhi, 7 January 2011

Question: Sir, Iran has said that they are ready to do business with India in Rupees. If they do it that way, then Indian exports to Iran can increase in exchange of energy.

External Affairs Minister: On the question related to Iran, depending upon the banking regulations of our own country that will be taken care of.

Question: Does this mean that India-Iran-Pakistan pipeline is off now completely?

External Affairs Minister: Did I give that impression?

Question: You did not. But you were talking about TAPI. So, I am asking will we have both or is it off?

External Affairs Minister: The negotiations are going on; the talks are going on; and it is in the initial process. I think we will proceed.

Source: Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), New Delhi, <http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=530317029>

8. Speech by Foreign Secretary at the Delhi Policy Group Seminar with MIT on Asian Security Challenges, New Delhi, 11 January 2011

Iran has the right to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes but these should be exercised consistent with its international obligations along with efforts to restore international confidence in the peaceful nature of its nuclear programme.

Source: Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), New Delhi, <http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=530117069>

c. Palestine

9. Speech by Mr. E Ahmed Minister of State for External Affairs at International Solidarity Day with Palestinians, New Delhi, 28 January 2011

H.E. Ambassador of Palestine in India, Mr. Adli Hassan Shaban Sadeq,

DG, Indian Council of World Affairs, Shri Sudhir Devare

Excellencies, distinguished invitees,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I feel honoured to be here today amidst this august gathering to mark the important occasion of International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. All of us present here, representing a wide cross-section of countries, in our own ways are here to express our 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 lasting solution is found at the earliest 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.

Excellencies,

Indians have always placed Palestine close to their hearts. Even before independence, India had demonstrated its solidarity with the Palestinian people and had looked forward to the emergence of an independent democratic state in Palestine in which the rights of all communities would be protected.

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 it became one of the first countries to recognize the State of Palestine. India opened its Representative Office in Palestine in 1996 following the establishment of the Palestinian National Authority. Here I would like to quote from a communication from a cable by then Prime Minister Shri Rajiv Gandhi addressed to President Yasser Arafat:

“It is with great pleasure that I extend to you on behalf of the Government and people of India and on my own behalf our heartiest felicitations on the declaration of an independent State of Palestine to which the Government of India has today extended formal recognition. This has been our cherished and single-minded objective all these years. We share the happiness of the Palestinian people on this auspicious day.

We are conscious that it is not the end of the struggle. It is nevertheless an important milestone on the path to meeting the legitimate aspirations of Palestinians within and outside the occupied territories. We wish you all success in your task of achieving the logical culmination of this declaration – the restoration of Palestinian land and the assertion of Palestinian sovereignty. India will continue to extend whole-hearted support to efforts to activate early peace negotiations for a just and comprehensive settlement within the framework of a UN-sponsored International Conference.”

India has and will always support the Palestinian people in their pursuit of legitimate goals and quest for development based on dignity and self-reliance. I recall my meeting with the then President of Palestine Authority Mr. Yasser Arafat on 17th September, 2004 when I carried the

Goodwill Message from the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India along with life saving medicines and special vehicles to the Palestine Authority. India reiterates its unwavering support to the Palestinian cause at every available opportunity and forum and that includes the visit of the Hon'ble President to Syria from 26-29 November 2010 and by Hon'ble Prime Minister in his message on the occasion of International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people, organized by the UN on 29 November 2010.

Excellencies,

Since the opening of the Representative Office, India has also extended material assistance to the Palestinian National Authority. The assistance has been for humanitarian relief, development projects, establishment of educational and training facilities, budgetary support etc. India has been 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. India extended further budgetary support of US\$ 10 million to the Palestine National Authority earlier this year in addition to a similar contribution last year, to assist in their work of reconstruction and development. As you may also be aware, on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the establishment of United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), India increased its annual contribution to US\$ 1 million from last year. We have also pledged to contribute this amount next year as well. Under the IBSA Fund, along with Brazil and South Africa, we are implementing a Sports Complex in Ramallah.

We believe the West Asian region is of vital importance to India with more than 4.5 million Indians making it their home. The region is also an important source of energy for India. India wishes to see the creation of an environment for the earliest possible resumption of dialogue. 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 United Nations 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 with East Jerusalem as its Capital, side by side and at peace with Israel as endorsed in the Quartet Roadmap and United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1397 & 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. India has called for an end to Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories and for an early and significant easing of restrictions on the free movement of persons and goods within Palestine.

India had welcomed the 'direct talks' between Israel and Palestine. The continued stalemate in the situation and hardening of positions is a matter of concern. We hope that the talks would be resumed leading to final resolution of the conflict. As a responsible member of the international community and as a country with long-established ties with West Asia, India desires to see a peaceful resolution to tensions in the region through peaceful dialogue.

I am happy to note that the Palestinian Embassy has started functioning from its new Building in Chanakyapuri, which was built as a gift of the government and people of India. The foundation stone of the Building was laid in the presence of our Prime Minister during the visit of the Palestinian President Mr. Mahmoud Abbas to India in October 2008.

On this occasion, I would like to re-affirm India's consistent and unwavering support to the friendly people of Palestine and reiterate India's belief that a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the region can be achieved through negotiations and dialogue so that a sovereign, independent, viable State of Palestine living side by side within secured borders, with the State of Israel, becomes a reality.

I thank the Indian Council for World Affairs for organizing this event.

Thank you, Jai Hind.

Source: MEA, New Delhi, <http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=530117115>

d. Qatar

10. India-Qatar High Level Monitoring Mechanism, New Delhi, 14 January 2011

The India-Qatar High Level Monitoring Mechanism (HLMM) was set up pursuant to a decision taken by the Prime Ministers of India and Qatar during the visit of Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh to Qatar in November 2008.

Mr. T. K. A. Nair, Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister and H.E. Dr. Khalid bin Mohamed Al-Attiyah, Minister of State for International Cooperation of the State of Qatar are the two Co-Chairpersons of the HLMM. The HLMM is mandated to monitor the progress in the implementation of the areas of cooperation agreed to by the leaders of the two countries in order to enhance bilateral cooperation. The first two meetings of the HLMM were held in February 2009 and November 2009 respectively.

The Third Meeting of the HLMM was held in New Delhi from 13-14 January 2011. The two sides reviewed the progress made in agreed areas of cooperation and agreed on specific steps to further intensify cooperation in areas such as petrochemicals, fertilizers, power, banking and finance sector, civil aviation and HRD.

In the hydrocarbon sector, the Qatari side conveyed their readiness to increase supply of LNG to meet India's requirements and to facilitate the participation of Indian companies in the oil and gas sector in Qatar. The Joint Working Group on Fertilizer is to meet in Doha shortly in order to discuss long term cooperation in the fertilizer sector. The Qatari side highlighted its interest in getting access to the PSU disinvestments via the Anchor investor route. The investment opportunities in the Kayamkulam expansion project of NTPC would be evaluated by the Qatar Investment Authority as also in renewable energy projects. The Indian side welcomed the proposal of the Qatari side for wide-ranging cooperation in the area of banking supervision and

exchange of information to combat money laundering and terror financing. The Joint committee for promoting investment into India will be meeting shortly to discuss investment opportunities.

The two sides agreed that the Fourth Meeting of the HLMM would be held in Doha in the first quarter of 2012.

Source: MEA, New Delhi, <http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=530217059>

Specific Issues

e. Hajj

11. Press conference by External Affairs Minister Mr. S M Krishna, New Delhi, 7 January 2011

India is fortunate to have the second largest Muslim population in the world. Every Muslim dreams of undertaking Hajj pilgrimage at least once in life time. One of the significant public responsibilities of my Ministry pertains to facilitation of this pilgrimage. In 2010 a record number of over 1, 71,000 pilgrims went to Hajj from India to Saudi Arabia. We managed to streamline the systems and arrangements, introduce transparency, efficiency and objectivity. Passports, accommodation, medical facilities and travel were arranged for the pilgrims. Nearly 900 flights were organized. For the first time ever, elections were held for zonal representatives of the Hajj Committee. Here I would like to specially thank the Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for their unstinted support in facilitating Hajj pilgrimage by Indian citizens.

Source: MEA, New Delhi, <http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=530317029>

Multilateral Issues/ Regional Issues

12. Press conference by External Affairs Minister Mr. S M Krishna, New Delhi, 7 January 2011

The Gulf region is another major partner of India and we significantly enhanced high level exchanges last year. Prime Minister's visit to Saudi Arabia and the conclusion of the "Riyadh Declaration" put in place "a new era of strategic partnership" between our countries. India's two-way trade with the Gulf has soared to US Dollar 107 billion making the region our largest trading partner. Some 6 million Indians live and work in the Gulf region. We will remain focused on expanding our engagement with the region.

Source: MEA, New Delhi, <http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=530317029>

13. Overseas Indian Affairs, New Delhi, New Delhi, 8 January 2011

The Minister of Overseas Indian Affairs Mr. Vayalar Ravi said that his Ministry is launching a project in collaboration with UNIFEM for “Empowering women workers from India going to the Gulf countries.” Under the project, innovative institutional arrangements would be set up to enable delivery of a host of services for women emigrants. The Ministry is also working towards establishing frameworks for transparent markets in labour and skills across borders, and to combat effectively illegal migration. Mr. Vayalar Ravi said his Ministry has also launched a comprehensive e-governance initiative called “E-Migrate” which will capture and manage data on all migrants. India is also working the modalities to share data on emigrant workers with other countries. The first such project is being finalised with UAE.

Source: Press Information Bureau (PIB) New Delhi,
<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=69424>

14. Speech by Foreign Secretary at the Delhi Policy Group Seminar with MIT on Asian Security Challenges, New Delhi, 11 January 2011

Maritime security is an important dimension of India’s bilateral relations with all Indian Ocean Littoral states as well with almost all regional bodies that are either based in or border the Indian Ocean region- ranging from SAARC, BIMSTEC, ARF, ASEAN, GCC, SADC to the AU. India’s ‘soft power’ gives it considerable advantages that few other countries can match in this region in terms of acceptance of India’s credentials and recognition of the vital contribution that we can make for stability and prosperity of the entire region.

Source: Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), New Delhi,
<http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=530117069>

15. Open Debate on the Middle East by Ambassador H.S. Puri at the UN Security Council, New York, 19 January 2011

Thank you, Mr. President. I wish to thank Under Secretary General Lynn Pascoe for his comprehensive briefing. I would also like to thank the Permanent Observer of Palestine for his statement.

The situation in the Middle East continues to be difficult. The much awaited resumption of talks in September between Israel and Palestine lasted only a few meetings. Since then, there has been considerable erosion of mutual confidence between the two parties, thereby undermining the peace process.

Mr. President, the events of the last few months have been discouraging with stalled talks, resumption of settlement activity and humanitarian suffering in Gaza. On the positive side, despite the difficult situation in Gaza, the economy there grew by 8% in 2010. The World Bank reported that if Palestinian Authority maintains its current performance in institution

building and public services, it is well positioned for the establishment of a State. Also, there were less number of violent incidents in the year 2010 than the previous years.

Unless broken, the current impasse has the potential of exacting a serious impact on the lives of the people, potentially contributing more fuel to an already combustible situation in the region. This should, therefore, strengthen our resolve in seeking to achieve a breakthrough in the current impasse so that both the parties return to talks.

Mr. President, India has a long-standing tradition of solidarity with the Palestinian people. It was expressed recently by our Prime Minister in his message on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. The Prime Minister reiterated India's unwavering support for the Palestinian people's struggle for a sovereign, independent, viable and united State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital living within secure and recognized borders, side by side and at peace with Israel as endorsed in the Arab Peace initiative, Quartet Road map and relevant UN Security Council Resolutions.

Also, India has long been contributing to the capacity and institution building of the Palestinian people with its material and technical assistance programmes. In this connection, Mr. President, I would also like to make a mention of the projects in which India is engaged with Brazil and South Africa through IBSA Forum. From the resources allocated from the IBSA Fund, we are undertaking partial reconstruction of the Al-Quds Hospital in Gaza and also construction of an Indoor Multi-purpose Sports Complex in Ramallah. Such projects, we believe, would be of some value to the Palestinian people in improving their health and recreational facilities.

Mr. President, we feel that genuine peace in the region 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 are therefore critical for achieving comprehensive and durable peace in the region. We are closely monitoring the situation in Lebanon which is deeply worrying.

The Special Tribunal for Lebanon must be allowed to complete its work. We call on all sides to resolve their differences and maintain peace.

While this has been stated several times before, and in many eloquent ways, yet this central truth bears repetition: a just, fair, durable and credible solution to this vexed problem can only come from meaningful, sincere and result-oriented dialogue; a dialogue which is essentially forward looking. For this, it is important that the ongoing settlement activities by Israel cease forthwith. I would also add that the settlements in the occupied territories are illegal under international law. We remain convinced that the lasting peace in the region will contribute to global stability and prosperity.

It is, therefore, critical, Mr President, for the international community to work closely with the parties with a view to encouraging them to resume direct negotiations. We are hopeful that the talks and negotiations would soon resume, leading to a comprehensive peace process for a final resolution of the conflict.

Thank you, Mr. President.

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

<http://www.un.int/india/2011/ind1810.pdf>

f. Miscellaneous:

16. Press conference by External Affairs Minister Mr. S M Krishna, New Delhi, 7 January 2011

...we have now some 25 million people of Indian origin living and working abroad in the Gulf, UK, USA, Canada and Australia, among over 110 countries across the globe.

Source: MEA, New Delhi, <http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=530317029>

Compiled By Anjani Kumar Singh

Anjani Kumar Singh is a Doctoral candidate in the School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi and can be reached at: aks1511@gmail.com

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Editor, MEI@ND: P R Kumaraswamy