



# ***MEI India Speaks***

(Monthly Digest of Official Indian Statements on Middle East)

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**Compiled by**

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## **Bilateral**

### **a. Iran**

#### **1. Trilateral Meeting on IPI Pipeline, 2 March 2010**

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

- (a) whether it is fact that India has stopped attending the trilateral meeting on Iran-Pakistan-India (IPI) pipeline meeting after the year 2007;
- (b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons for the same;
- (c) the details of the stickling points, if any, from the part of India on the above; and
- (d) the steps taken, if any, to unravel the same and also the present status of IPI?

**Answer:** Minister in the Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas (Mr. Murli Deora):

(a) & (b): The last meeting of tripartite Joint Working Group (JWG) on IPI gas pipeline project was held in New Delhi on June 28-29, 2007, which was attended by representatives from all the participating countries, viz., Iran, Pakistan and India.

(c) & (d): Various important issues concerning the Project, viz., pricing of gas, delivery point of gas, project structure, payment of transportation tariff & transit fees for passage of natural gas through Pakistan, etc., are under discussion amongst the participating countries.

Such multilateral projects involve protracted discussions, as all the aspects have to be carefully examined and deliberated upon to the satisfaction of the participating countries to protect each country's interests and to avoid any problems in the future in the successful operation of the project.

**Source: Rajya Sabha (Council of States), Unstarred Question No. 554 asked by Mr. P. R. Rajan,**  
<http://164.100.47.5/qsearch/QResult.aspx>

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## **2. Agreement with Iran on Science & Technology, 3 March 2010**

This was stated by Mr. Prithviraj Chavan, the Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Science and Technology in the Lok Sabha, in reply to a question by Mr. W. B. Rajaram:

An Inter-Governmental Agreement on Cooperation in the fields of Science and Technology between Government of Republic of India and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran was signed in New Delhi on January 25, 2003.

The salient features of the Agreement are:

(a) Setting up of a Joint Committee for determining the areas of mutual cooperation and formulation of Programme of Cooperation on regular basis.

(b) Finalizing subsidiary agreements between the respective organizations, enterprises and institutions relating to science & technology.

(c) Promoting cooperation in mutually agreed upon areas, such as, (i) Information and Communication Technology; (ii) Biotechnology; (iii) Pharmaceuticals Research and (iv) Food Technology and others through visits and exchange of experts, holding scientific and technological workshops, implementation of Joint Projects, training and exchange of experiences in regard of Science and Technology infrastructure, women entrepreneurship and technology in rural areas.

The agreement envisages development of cooperation in the mutually agreed areas of science and technology on the basis of equality and mutual advantage. It helps in strengthening the bilateral relation between India and Iran in science and technology.

**Source: Ministry of Science & Technology Press Release, Press Information Bureau, New Delhi,** <http://www.pib.nic.in/release/release.asp?relid=58741>

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### **3. Indo Iran Gas Pipeline Project, 4 March 2010**

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

- (a) the status of Indo-Iran gas pipeline project;
- (b) whether there is any delay in implementation of the project; and
- (c) if so the steps taken by the Government to resolve the hurdles in implementation of this project?

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

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

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.

**Source: Lok Sabha (House of the People) Unstarred Question No. 1191, asked by Mr. Hassan Khan,**  
<http://164.100.47.132/LssNew/psearch/QResult15.aspx?qref=82398>

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### **4. Alternative Source of Gas Supply, 9 March 2010**

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

- (a) the present status of the negotiations in respect of the Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline project; and
- (b) the action proposed to be taken by India to augment its gas supply from Central Asian countries, which were formerly part of the erstwhile Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) in case the Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline proposal does not materialize?

**Answer:** Minister in the Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas (Mr. Murli Deora):

(a) & (b): In order to enhance energy security of the country, import of natural gas is being pursued from Iran through Iran-Pakistan-India (IPI) Gas Pipeline Project. Various important issues concerning the Project are under discussion amongst the participating countries, viz., Iran, Pakistan & India. 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. Implementation of the Project will start only after satisfactory resolution of the issues under discussion amongst the countries participating in the Project.

Import of natural gas is being pursued from Turkmenistan as well. India has been formally admitted as a member of Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline project in the 10th Steering Committee Meeting (SCM) of the Project held in Islamabad on April 23-24, 2008. Various important issues concerning the Project are under discussion amongst the participating countries, viz., Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan & India.

**Source: Rajya Sabha (Council of States) Starred Question No. 177, asked by Mr. Varinder Singh Bajwa, <http://164.100.47.5/qsearch/QResult.aspx>**

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## **5. Gasoline Exporting Companies, 9 March 2010**

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

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(b) whether the United States of America has raised objection alleging that gasoline supplied by Reliance Industries Ltd. from Jamnagar refinery to Iran is being used for suspected nuclear weapons programme;

(c) If so, the details thereof and reaction of Government thereon;

(d) Whether in January the United States Senate passed a legislation that would allow the United States President to penalize companies that export gasoline to Iran; and

(e) If so, the details thereof and action proposed in this regard?

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

...

(b): The US Government has not raised the matter with the Government of India.

(c): Does not arise.

(d) & (e): The United States (US) Senate passed the Comprehensive Iran Sanctions & Divestment Bill (S2799) on 28th January 2010, which authorizes the US President to apply the sanctions under the Iran Sanctions Act 1996 to foreign entities that invest in Iran's domestic refining sector (above US\$ 20 million), sell refined petroleum products to Iran (above US\$ 200,000 in a year) or provide supporting services for investment, construction and trade in this sector (including brokering, insurance, underwriting, consulting etc.)

The Bill also authorizes US Federal and State agencies to divest in any company that is engaged in Iran's energy sector; imposes prohibition on federal procurement from any entity that supplies Iran with hardware and software that enables Iran to monitor, disrupt or restrict free speech on information flow; calls for closer scrutiny for export control of countries through which sensitive technologies of US origin are transshipped or diverted to Iran. The bill also has a Sense of US

Congress calling for sanctions against Iran's Central Bank under existing powers of the President, targeting of IRGC and pursuit of multilateral sanctions.

The Government of India has conveyed to the US Government that sanctions on Iran have proved to be counter-productive and that all differences with Iran should be resolved peacefully through dialogue and negotiation.

**Source: Rajya Sabha (Council of States) Unstarred Question No. 1306, asked by Mr. Nand Kishore Yadav, <http://164.100.47.5/qsearch/QResult.aspx>**

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## **6. Deepwater Gas Pipeline Project, 9 March 2010**

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

- (a) whether the proposal for natural gas pipeline via Pakistan is getting bogged down with security concerns and Government is considering a proposal to bring gas from the Middle East through a deep sea pipeline;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether the proposed South Asia Gas Enterprises Pvt. Ltd's deep water pipeline would be routed through the exclusive economic zones of the transit countries thereby ensuring the security of supply;
- (d) if so, the details thereof; and
- (e) whether it is expected to transport 30 million cubic meter gas per day the same value that Iran earmarked for India in proposed Iran-Pakistan-India pipeline?

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

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

In recent years, there have been significant technological advancements in the field of Deep Sea Gas transportation technology. Accordingly, for the last few years, interest has been revived in deep sea gas pipeline route from Middle-East to India. Gas supplies from several gas rich countries of Middle East through Gas Gathering pipeline with hub in Oman (or its proximity) have been proposed, so as to supply gas to Indian Coast through the said Deep Sea Pipeline.

GAIL (India) Ltd. has entered into a Principles of Cooperation with M/s SAGE in the month of July 2009 for developing the pipeline Project. As such, the proposal is at its initial stage.

**Source: Rajya Sabha (Council of States) Unstarred Question No. 1313, asked by Mr. B. S. Gnanadesikan, <http://164.100.47.5/qsearch/QResult.aspx>**

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## **7. Status of IPI Pipeline, 16 March 2010**

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

- (a) the latest position of construction of gas pipeline from Iran and the amount of money spent on this project;
- (b) whether Pakistan is committed to allow laying of pipeline through its territory;
- (c) if not, what are the other alternatives available which are economically viable; and
- (d) what is the estimated cost related to security and maintenance of this project overseas?

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

(a) to (c): India is pursuing the import of natural gas from Iran through Iran-Pakistan-India (IPI) Gas Pipeline Project. Various important issues, viz., pricing of gas, delivery point of gas, project structure, security of supplies, payment of transportation tariff and transit fees for passage of natural gas through Pakistan, etc., are under discussion amongst the participating countries. GAIL(India) Ltd. and Indian Oil Corporation Ltd., the PSUs involved with the IPI Project, have spent approximately Rs.55.7 million in connection with pre project activities.

Apart from IPI gas pipeline project, import of natural gas is also being pursued from Turkmenistan through Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline project. The option of bringing gas from Middle East countries to Indian market through a deep sea gas pipeline is also being explored. Further, Government of India has adopted a multi-pronged strategy to augment gas supplies, covering inter alia Intensification of domestic Exploration & Production activities, exploitation of unconventional sources like Coal Bed Methane & Underground Coal Gasification and import of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG).

(d): Such details regarding IPI gas pipeline project can be worked out only after firming up of the basic parameters of the Project.

**Source: Rajya Sabha (Council of States) Unstarred Question No. 2096, asked by Mr. Rajkumar Dhoot, <http://164.100.47.5/qsearch/QResult.aspx>**

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## **8. IPI Pipeline, 16 March 2010**

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

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(d) whether Iran has warned that it would not indefinitely wait for India to join the project and also suggest it might consider China as they are also interested in the pipeline project; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

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

...

(d) & (e): Government is only aware of press reports quoting Iranian officials as stating that Iran would welcome participation of China in the gas pipeline Project.

**Source: Rajya Sabha (Council of States) Unstarred Question No. 2085, asked by Mr. N. R. Govindraj, <http://164.100.47.5/qsearch/QResult.aspx>**

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## **b. Iraq**

### **9. Development of Oil Reserves in Iraq, 4 March 2010**

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

(a) whether any decision regarding bidding for oil and gas fields in Iraq on the basis of the discussions held with the oil companies has since been taken;

(b) if so, whether the Oil India Limited has also decided to participate in the exploration and production of oil and gas in Iraq;

(c) if so, the details thereof;

(d) the number of projects undertaken by the Public Sector Oil companies and Private Oil Companies of India to develop the vast oil reserves in Iraq during the last three years;

(e) the number of projects likely to be undertaken by the Public Sector and private sector oil companies in Iraq during the year 2010-2011; and

(f) the net revenue earned by these companies from these projects during the years 2005 to 2009?

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

(a) to (c): ONGC Videsh Limited (OVL) submitted one bid in the First Petroleum Licensing Round held in Iraq in June 2009. In the 2nd Iraqi International Bidding Round held in December, 2009 OVL had bid for Halfaya Field in partnership with Oil India Limited (OIL) & Turkiye Petrolleri Anonim Ortakligi (TAPO) and for Garraf Field in partnership with TAPO. However, the bids of OVL & OIL were not successful.

(d): Public Sector Oil companies (PSUs) are not having any projects in Iraq. In so far as private companies are concerned, Ministry does not compile information in this regard.

(e): Block 8 project, Iraq is being pursued by OVL for participation.

(f): Does not arise in view of (d) and (e) above.

**Source: Lok Sabha (House of the People) Unstarred Question No. 1285, asked by Mr. J. M. Aaron Rashid, <http://164.100.47.132/LssNew/psearch/QResult15.aspx?qref=82415>**

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## **c. Israel**

### **10. Indo- Israel Cooperation, 3 March 2010**

**Question:** Will the Minister of Space be pleased to state:

(a) whether India and Israel are cooperating with each other in the field of Space;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the recent launch of Polaris Satellite of Israel by the Government is a part of this understanding;

(d) if so, the details thereof;

(e) whether any agreement has been signed between India and Israel to undertake any project in future; and

(f) if so, the details thereof ?

**Answer:** Minister of the State in the Ministry of Science & Technology and Minister of the State in the Ministry of Earth Sciences (Mr. Prithviraj Chavan):

(a): Yes, Sir.

(b): The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and the Israeli Space Agency (ISA) have been cooperating in the area of peaceful uses of outer space.

(c): No, Sir. The launch of `Polaris` (TECHSAR) was a commercial contract with Antrix Corporation of the Department of Space.

(d): Does not arise.

(e): Yes, Sir.

(f): Under a memorandum of Understanding, Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and Israeli Space Agency mutually agreed for flying an Israeli instrument called TAUVEEX (Tel Aviv Ultra Violet Experiment) on ISRO's satellite as a guest instrument. This scientific instrument is a

space borne telescope operating in ultraviolet region whose data will be available to Indian scientists.

**Source: Lok Sabha (House of the People) Unstarred Question No. 1091, asked by Mr. Hansraj Gangaram Ahir, <http://164.100.47.132/LssNew/psearch/QResult15.aspx?qref=83008>**

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### **11. Procurement of Defence Equipment from Israel, 8 March 2010**

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

- (a) whether the Government proposes to purchase defence equipment from Israel;
- (b) if so, the discussions held so far in this regard between both the countries; and
- (c) the details of equipment in regard to which the final decision has been taken by the Government?

**Answer:** The Minister in the Ministry of Defence (Mr. A.K. Antony):

(a) to (c): Procurement of defence items is made from various indigenous as well as foreign sources including Israel in accordance with the defence procurement procedure. This is a continuous process undertaken for the modernisation of the Armed Forces to keep them in a state of readiness to meet any eventuality.

**Source: Lok Sabha (House of the People) Unstarred Question No. 1700, asked by Mr. Wakchaure Bhausaheb Rajaram, <http://164.100.47.132/LssNew/psearch/QResult15.aspx?qref=82634>**

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### **12. Indian Minister of State for Science & Technology, Mr. Prithviraj Chauhan visits Israel March 20-23, 2010, 21 March 2010**

Mr. Prithviraj Chavan, Hon'ble Minister of State for Science & Technology and Earth Sciences, currently on a 3-day visit to Israel, called on President Shimon Peres this afternoon for a wide-ranging discussion on India-Israel scientific and technological cooperation. Highlighting Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh's decision that the next 10 years would be the decade of innovation in India, Mr. Chavan invited Israeli scientific establishment for closer cooperation with the large number of new technological and scientific institutes of excellence being currently set up in India. Specifically, he explored the idea of setting up a joint institute dealing with advanced research in mathematics and computer sciences.

2. President Peres outlined his vision of close cooperation between the two countries in the fields of IT, bio-technology, nano-technology and other areas of Israeli innovation. He also recalled India's rich traditions and expressed admiration for India's recent economic growth.

3. Earlier, Mr. Chavan also met Minister of Science & Technology Rabbi Prof. Daniel Hershkowitz to review ongoing cooperation between the two countries on the basis of existing Memorandum of Understanding. The two Ministers discussed possibilities of greater exchange of scientists and researchers from both sides to take advantage of the complementarities between the two countries. At the official level, the Joint Committee meeting on Science & Technology was also held and identified the new areas of solar energy and information and communication technology, specifically imaging, sensing and robotics for joint research and development.

4. Mr. Chavan also visited renowned Israeli Institutes - TECHNION and Weizmann Institute of Science for interaction with the senior management to explore closer cooperation with Indian scientific institutions. He visited a desalination plant as well as the drip irrigation facilities at Naan Kibbutz to get a firsthand knowledge of water and agricultural solutions which could have possible applications in India.

**Source: Embassy of India, Tel Aviv, Israel, <http://www.indembassy.co.il/Visit.htm>**

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## **d. Jordan**

### **13. India- Jordan Relations, 26 March 2010**

India and Jordan signed their first bilateral agreement for cooperation and friendly relations in 1947, which was formalized in 1950 when the two countries established full-fledged diplomatic ties. There has been regular high level exchange of visits between the two countries during all these years. The State visit of King Abdullah-II and Queen Rania to India in December 2006 provided an excellent opportunity for exchange of views on all aspects of our bilateral relations. During the visit, a number of bilateral agreements were signed. MOS (EA) visited Jordan in September 2007 and Mr. Jyotiraditya M. Scindia, Minister of State for Commerce & Industry visited Jordan on February 15-16, 2010.

#### **Bilateral Trade**

Indo-Jordan trade is governed by an agreement signed in 1976 under which a Trade and Economic Joint Committee promotes and monitors the progress. The volume of bilateral trade in the last two years is as follows (in US\$ million):

YEAR	INDIA'S EXPORTS	INDIA'S IMPORTS
2007-08	358.33	687.06
2008-09	431.83	1776.57

An MoU on cooperation in Science and Technology was signed between Indian National Academy of Sciences and the Royal Scientific Society of Jordan in January 2006.

There is a regular cultural exchange, including visits of performing troupes and exhibitions between the two countries. A Cultural Exchange Programme for the year 2007-09 was signed on 1st December, 2006 during King Abdullah-II's visit to India.

At present, there are over 500 Jordanian students pursuing studies in different universities in India. Besides, India offers 20 slots every year to Jordanian candidates under the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) programme. Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) also offers five annual scholarships to meritorious Jordanian students for higher education in India.

There are about 7000 Indian nationals living in Jordan, most of whom are employed in textile, construction and manufacturing sectors, fertilizer companies, health sector, universities, IT, financial companies and multilateral organizations.

The Government of Jordan liberalized the visa-regime for Indians in November 2009 under which Indian tourists are now getting visa for two weeks on arrival at the airport. Around 30,000 Indians visited Jordan in 2009.

**Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi,**  
<http://www.mea.gov.in/foreignrelation/jordan.pdf>

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## **e. Kuwait**

### **14. Indian Oil's Refinery Project in Paradip, 2 March 2010**

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

(a) the reasons for slow progress of Indian Oil's Refinery project at Paradip;

...

**Answer:** The Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas (Mr. Murli Deora):

(a): The reasons for slow progress of Paradip Refinery of Indian Oil Corporation Ltd. (IOCL) are as under:

Government of India accorded approval for setting up of a 9 Million Metric Ton Per Annum (MMTPA) grass-root refinery at Paradip, Orissa by Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOCL) in joint venture with Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) in July, 1998. Government of Orissa granted Sales Tax benefits for 11 years from the date of commissioning. As KPC's participation was not encouraging, Board of Directors of IOCL approved implementation of 9 MMTPA Refinery Project in August, 1999 at an estimated cost of Rs.83120 million .

...

**Source: Rajya Sabha (Council of States), Unstarred Question No. 559 asked by Mr. Ramachandra Khuntia,** <http://164.100.47.5/qsearch/QResult.aspx>

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### **15. India holds talks with US, Kuwait, Mexico and Indonesia for Cooperation in oil sector during 12th IEF at Cancun, 31 March 2010**

Indian delegation led by Mr. Murli Deora, Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas had a series of bilateral meetings with the delegations of different countries on the sidelines of the 12th International Energy Forum (IEF) meeting at Cancun, Mexico late yesterday (India time)...

In its meeting with Kuwaiti delegation, Indian side emphasized on more crude oil supplies and criss-cross investments. Mr. Murli Deora, Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas informed his counterpart from Kuwait Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Minister of Oil Petroleum Secretary that India is raising its refining capacity significantly which would soon rise to about 250 million metric tonnes. He added that the India looks greater oil supplies. Suggesting mutual investments, India invited oil companies of Kuwait to invest in the up-coming petrochemical projects of ONGC and IOC at Mangalore and Paradip. Mr. Deora extended an invitation to Mr. Al-Sabah to visit India.

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**Source: Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas Press Release, Press Information Bureau, New Delhi, <http://www.pib.nic.in/release/release.asp?relid=59975>**

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## **f. Lebanon**

### **16. India – Lebanon Relations, 26 March 2010**

India and Lebanon enjoy cordial and friendly relations based on a number of complementarities such as parliamentary democracy, non-alignment, human rights, commitment to a just world order, regional and global peace, free market economy and a vibrant entrepreneurial spirit.

#### **Bilateral Relations – A Review**

India established diplomatic relations with Lebanon in 1954 and maintained its diplomatic representation in Beirut throughout the civil war except for a brief closure of about two months from August 5 to October 16, 1989 following the escalation of fighting in Beirut, as contrary to a large number of other foreign Embassies in Beirut which closed down during the period of the civil war (1975-1990).

After the withdrawal of Syrian troops in April 2005, prospects for intensifying linkages brightened with Lebanon making renewed efforts to find its place in the international community a sovereign republic, free of hegemonistic influences. This process received a setback with the sudden outbreak of war between Hizbullah and Israel on July 12, 2006. The massive destruction of Lebanon's physical infrastructure in the 34-days of Israeli bombardment caused a severe setback to its recovery and growth as an economy and a nation. Pursuant to the attack, Government of India strongly condemned the bombing and called for immediate and unconditional ceasefire. In his suo- motto statement in Parliament on Lebanon, Hon'ble Prime Minister of India Mr. Manmohan Singh announced Rs.10 Crores for humanitarian aid and reconstruction. An Indian Air Force plane carrying relief material such as tents, blankets and sheets also landed in Beirut, besides the solidarity visit by Mr. C.R. Gharekhan, as PM's Special Envoy. Since November 1998, an Indian battalion is participating in peacekeeping operations in

Southern Lebanon under the UNIFIL. The Indian battalion also renders humanitarian assistance including medical assistance, veterinary aid, technical support to schools, and has also provided the Jaipur Foot to mine victims in villages in South Lebanon.

An offshoot of the war was the mass exodus by the 12,000 odd Indian workers in Lebanon. The Government of India mounted an operation to evacuate its nationals from the war zone, by road through Damascus and later, by sending Indian Navy ships, over a period of one month.

India has welcomed the formation of a national unity government led by PM Saad Hariri in November 2009.

### **Bilateral Trade**

Indo-Lebanon trade, which had come to a virtual halt during the civil war, has actually picked up. The total trade between Lebanon and India was to the tune of US\$ 13.60 million in 1993. The volume of trade between the two countries in the last two years is as follows(in US\$ million):

YEAR	INDIA'S EXPORTS	INDIA'S IMPORTS
2007-08	96.73	9.45
2008-09	132.75	13.20

### **Cultural relations**

A Cultural Agreement was signed in April 1997 during the visit of Lebanese Foreign Minister, Mr. Fares Boueiz for the Non-Aligned Ministerial Conference in New Delhi. The agreement came into force with the exchange of the instruments of ratification in February 2000. The Embassy of India in Beirut has organized several cultural events in Lebanon such as Indian Film Week (January & April, 1998 & March 2007), Photographic Exhibition "Glimpses of India" (June – July, 1998) and "Gandhi: His Life and His Message" (May, 2007), Lectures on India, India Night in Zahle (May 2000) and Visits of Bharatnatyam dance troupe (December, 2007) and Rajasthani music group (October, 2008).

Besides the above events, a large number of Indian artists have visited Lebanon, mostly through international impresarios. Pt. Ravi Shanker, accompanied by Anushka Shanker performed at the opening night of the Beiteddine Festival in July 2005. Percussionist and Vocalist Trilok Guru performed at Liban Jazz festival in September 2005. In previous years, Pt. Hari Prasad Chaurasia and Pt. Zakir Hussain have performed in Lebanon.

### **Technical Assistance**

India offers 15 slots to Lebanese nationals under the ITEC programme covering different sectors such as cooperative banking, journalism, diplomacy, legislative drafting, computers, auditing etc. 54 Lebanese candidates have availed of training under ITEC programme till date.

**Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi,**

## **g. Turkey**

### **17. Stability in Afghanistan, 3 March 2010**

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

...

(c) the Indian diplomatic response to an ostensible refusal by Turkey to invite India to a Conference on Afghanistan held in Istanbul a few days before the London Conference in the last week of January 2010;

...

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

...

(c): Government took up the issue of exclusion of India from the Istanbul Conference on Afghanistan with the Turkish Government. The Turkish Government has told us that they would have liked India to participate in the Conference. However, the Conference had evolved from a trilateral meeting involving Afghanistan, Turkey and Pakistan, and it was not possible to evolve a consensus on India's participation. The Turkish side further acknowledged India's positive role in Afghanistan's economic development.

...

**Source: Lok Sabha (House of the People) Starred Question No. 96, asked by Mr. Manish Tewari, <http://164.100.47.132/LssNew/psearch/QResult15.aspx?qref=82101>**

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## **h. United Arab Emirates**

### **18. UAE Trade Office in India, 8 March 2010**

**Question:** Will the minister of Commerce & Industry be pleased to state:

(a) whether United Arab Emirates has sent any proposal to the Government to open its trade offices in India;

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

(c) the details of bi-lateral trade between India and United Arab Emirates during the last three years;

(d) whether any new sectors are being identified to increase bi-lateral trade after the establishment of the trade office of United Arab Emirates in India; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

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

(a) & (b): No Madam, Government of India has not received any proposal from United Arab Emirates to open trade offices in India. Opening of trade offices is an internal decision of the concerned country and Government of India is not involved in this process.

(c): The details of bilateral trade between India and the United Arab Emirates during the last three years is as under (All Values in US\$ Million):

Year	Export	Import	Total Trade
2006-2007	12,021.77	8,655.28	20,677.05
2007-2008	15,636.91	13,482.61	29,119.52
2008-2009	24,477.48	23,791.25	48,268.72

(d) & (e): Does not arise.

**Source: Lok Sabha (House of the People) Unstarred Question No. 1604, asked by Mr. Hansraj Gangaram Ahir, <http://164.100.47.132/LssNew/psearch/QResult15.aspx?qref=82583>**

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### **19. Visit of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Makhtoum, UAE Vice President and Prime Minister, Ruler of Dubai to India, 11 March 2010**

His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Makhtoum, UAE Vice President & Prime Minister, Ruler of Dubai paid a working visit to India on March 11, 2010. The visiting dignitary called on Hon'ble Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh. He was accompanied by HH Sheikh Maktoum Bin Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Deputy Ruler of Dubai, HE Sheikh Ahmad Bin Saeed Al Maktoum, Head of Dubai Higher Committee for Financial Policy, HE Ms. Reem Ibrahim Al-Hashmi, Minister of State and other senior officials from UAE. During the meeting, issues of mutual interest to both countries were discussed, including greater collaboration in combating the menace of terrorism, and enhancing security cooperation. The two leaders also reviewed the state of bilateral relations in order to take the relationship between the two countries to a higher level, and to increase cooperation in technology, trade and investments so that the full potential existing in the two countries could be realized to their mutual advantage.

In 2009, UAE with US\$ 45 billion bilateral trade has emerged as India's largest trading partner. Investments from the UAE also significantly increased, especially in the infrastructure sector.

His Highness Sheikh Mohammed had earlier visited India in March 2007.

**Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, <http://www.mea.gov.in/pressrelease/2010/03/11pr01.htm>**

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## Multilateral

### 20. Import of Natural Gas from Middle East through Deep Sea, 4 March 2010

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

- (a) whether the Government proposes to transport gas from the Middle East through the deep sea pipelines;
- (b) if so, whether the Government plans to appoint GAIL as the nodal agency to pursue a sub-sea pipeline for import of gas from Iran and Qatar;
- (c) if so, whether any agreement in this regard has been reached;
- (d) if so, the details thereof; and
- (e) the time by which the final decision is likely to be taken in this regard?

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

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

**Source:** Lok Sabha (House of the People) Unstarred Question No. 1334, asked by Mr. Anandrao Vithoba Adsul, <http://164.100.47.132/LssNew/psearch/QResult15.aspx?qref=82426>

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### 21. FTA with Israel and the GCC Countries, 8 March 2010

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

- (a) whether the Government proposes to sign a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) the details of economic benefits likely for India by the signing of the said FTA;
- (d) whether the Government proposes for a separate Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with Israel; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

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

(a): India is negotiating a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries.

(b) & (c): So far, two rounds of negotiations have been held. The Free Trade Agreement is aimed at giving a boost to trade and investment with the Gulf countries.

(d) & (e): Yes Madam, Government proposes to enter into a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with Israel. It was decided to launch negotiations at a mutually convenient date and place.

**Source: Lok Sabha (House of the People) Unstarred Question No. 1679, asked by Mr. K. Sudhakaran, <http://164.100.47.132/LssNew/psearch/QResult15.aspx?qref=82596>**

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## **22. Trade with the Arab World, 10 March 2010**

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

(a) whether India aims to double trade with Arab world;

(b) if so, the pacts signed, so far;

(c) the benefit to our country in future area-wise especially in the remaining Eleventh Five Year Plan; and

(d) the trade took place in the Eleventh Five Year Plan, year-wise, with Arab countries?

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

(a) to (c): It is a constant endeavour of the Government to enhance trade with all the countries for mutual benefit. So far, no pacts have been signed with Arab world.

(d): The total trade, during first two years of the 11th Five Year Plan, with Arab countries are as under (all values in US\$ Million):

S.No.	Country	2007-2008	2008-2009
1.	BAHARAIN	1,087.89	1,729.34
2.	IRAN	12,878.53	14,910.78
3.	IRAQ	71,099.90	8,147.37
4.	JORDAN	4,245.39	2,210.40
5.	KUWAIT	8,385.79	10,391.24

6.	LEBANON	106.18	145.95
7.	OMAN	2,080.89	1,984.50
8.	QATAR	2,994.48	4,173.28
9.	SAUDI ARABIA	23,181.46	26,083.12
10.	SYRIA	693.02	522.42
11.	UAE	29,119.52	48,268.73
12.	YEMEN REPubLC	2,468.60	1,541.90
	<b>Total</b>	<b>158341.65</b>	<b>120109.03</b>

**Source: Rajya Sabha (Council of States) Unstarred Question No. 1385, asked by Mr. Mohd. Ali Khan, <http://164.100.24.219/annex/219/Au1385.htm>**

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## Miscellaneous

### 23. Modernization of Trivandrum Airport, 11 March 2010

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

(a) the number of flights operating from Trivandrum Airport in Kerala to foreign countries, sector-wise and country-wise;

...

**Answer:** Minister of State (Independent Charge) of the Ministry of Civil Aviation (Mr. Praful Patel):

(a): At present 59 to UAE, 9 to Bahrain, 4 to Kuwait, 26 to Oman, 9 to Qatar, 21 to Maldives, 7 to Malaysia, 3 to Singapore, 7 to Sri Lanka and 3 to Saudi Arabia, flights per week are operating to/from Trivandrum Airport in Kerala.

...

**Source: Lok Sabha (House of the People) Unstarred Question No. 2412, asked by Mr. Suresh Kodikunnil, <http://164.100.47.132/LssNew/psearch/QResult15.aspx?qref=82933>**

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### 24. Foreign Secretary launches website for Arabic translations of MEA Press Releases, 29 March 2010

Foreign Secretary Mrs. Nirupama Rao launched a website for providing daily Arabic translations of important MEA press releases. The site (<http://www.aniarabic.com>) operated by ANI, can be accessed free of cost.

Last year a similar site (<http://www.aniurdu.com>) providing Urdu translations of MEA press releases was launched, which is being widely accessed by Indian and foreign media.

**Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi,**

<http://www.mea.gov.in/cgi-bin/db2www/meaxpsite/coverpage.d2w/coverpg?sec=pr&filename=pressrelease/2010/03/29pr03.htm>

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Note: One Crore = 10 million

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