

INDIA SPEAKS

(Monthly Digest of Official Indian Statements on Middle East)

No. 20

March 2011

Bilateral Issues

a. Bahrain

1. Indians in Bahrain safe, New Delhi, 18 February 2011

In response to a question the Official Spokesperson said that India is closely following the developments in Bahrain. Our Mission in Manama is in regular touch with representatives of the Indian community numbering over 350,000, who are reported to be safe. We hope that calm soon returns and prevails in Bahrain.

Source: MEA (Ministry of External Affairs), New Delhi,
<http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=530317196>

b. Egypt

2. India hopes for peaceful resolution of Egypt situation, New Delhi, 1 February 2011

India continues to closely follow the mass protests in Egypt which are an articulation of the aspirations of the Egyptian people for reform. It is hoped that the current situation will be resolved in a peaceful manner, in the best interests of the people of Egypt. India wishes that Egypt, a fellow developing country with which she enjoys close and traditional ties, will continue to be a strong and stable nation, contributing to peace and prosperity in the region.

Source: MEA, New Delhi, <http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=530217128>

3. External Affairs Minister Mr. S.M. Krishna shocked by attack on journalists in Egypt, New Delhi, 3 February, 2011

“I am pained and shocked to learn about the detention and attacks on journalists in Egypt, who were reporting on the unfolding developments. Such incidents are totally unacceptable and must stop immediately. The journalists must be released unharmed forthwith and the government must ensure their safety and security. Violence has no place in any civil society and must be strongly condemned by all right thinking persons”.

Source: MEA, New Delhi, <http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=530117140>

4. Advisory on travel of journalists to Egypt, New Delhi, 3 February 2011

A number of Indian journalists have travelled in recent days to Egypt to cover the developments. It is learnt that more are planning a visit in coming days.

Egyptian regulations require foreign journalists to obtain accreditation with the State Information Service, a procedure which normally takes 2 to 3 weeks.

It is understood that around 3000 foreign and Egyptian correspondents are currently in Cairo to file / film stories and a number of them are WITHOUT SUITABLE accreditation. A number of journalists, including some Indian journalists, have got into trouble as a result.

Even though the resources of the Embassy of India Cairo are under pressure, they have been extending assistance and facilitation to the Indian journalists. However to avoid being detained or being sent back by Egyptian authorities, it is requested that the following may please be borne in mind:

- Carry your identity card and or passport at all times. Keep a copy of your documents safely in the hotel room.
- Ensure that you have valid visa and equipment clearance* papers. (*Our Embassy in Cairo can help with equipment clearance provided at least 48 hour advance intimation is given with to them with complete details by fax + 202 2736 1972 or email: ambassador@indembcairo.com .)
- Carry sufficient amount of foreign currency of various denomination particularly in US dollars, as ATMs are working sporadically only and currency exchange counters are closed.
- In view of the extreme shortage of hotel accommodation please settle for anything suitable that is readily available. Please ensure that you have confirmed reservations before setting off for

Cairo.

- Please take care of your personal safety while reporting.
- Embassy of India has set up a round the clock Control Room. Telephone numbers +202 2736 0556 or +202 2736 0052 or +202 2735 6168
- In case of EMERGENCY please contact Mr. Dinesh Setia on his mobile number + 2018 349 7776.

Source: MEA, New Delhi, <http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=530217139>

5. There are warm people-to-people ties and Indians are loved in Egypt: Envoy, Cairo, 8 February 2011

New Delhi: As the spontaneous pro-democracy protests at the cornerstone of the Arab world took everybody by surprise, the Indian Embassy located at the relatively peaceful Zamalek area of Cairo became the hub for the small Indian community in the country. Close to 400 Indians caught special flights back home but an overwhelming majority decided to stay back, Indian Ambassador to Egypt R Swaminathan tells Manu Pubby.

After almost two weeks, banks are open. Is this indicative of some return to normalcy in Cairo?

Near normalcy is returning as the banks as well as government offices have re-opened. Normal day-to-day activity too seems to be back but at the same time the night curfew continues.

What kind of discussions have you had with the Egyptian government since the crises began?

Our prime concern was the safety and well-being of Indian citizens. We got in touch with the authorities when we were trying to get special flights for people who wished to return and they were very helpful. Also, when we approached them to help journalists who were in trouble, they responded immediately.

What was the reaction of the Indian community here after the mass protests broke out?

We set up an emergency control room here at the embassy to answer all calls and got in touch with the Indian community here that numbers close to 3,600. We established contact and found that many of them wanted to go back. The government then decided to arrange for three special flights with the help of Air-India. While 350 Indians returned, a majority of them decided to stay back, almost 90 per cent.

Have the panic calls come down in the last few days as things have calmed down?

We have got in touch over the telephone with most people of the Indian community here and have given them a list of do's and don't's to keep safe. We have not received any panic calls in the past two days even though the control room remains active.

How do you see the situation unfolding over the next few days?

With people returning to work today, we are hopeful things will soon come back to normalcy. We are also planning to restart the visa office and cultural centre that is located close to Tahrir square shortly.

Do you see ties with Egypt getting affected in view of the current situation?

We have had close and traditional ties with Egypt. There are warm people-to-people ties and Indians are loved here. We hope the current situation resolves peacefully.

Source: The Indian Express, New Delhi, <http://www.indianexpress.com/story-print/747376/>

6. External Affairs Minister Mr. S.M. Krishna's Statement on stepping down of President Mubarak, New Delhi, 11 February 2011

We welcome the decision of President Mubarak to step down in deference to the wishes of the people of Egypt. We also welcome the commitment of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces to ensure a peaceful transition of power in a time bound manner to establish an open and democratic framework of governance. We are proud of our traditionally close relations with the people of Egypt and wish them peace, stability and prosperity.

Source: MEA, New Delhi, <http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=530217167>

7. Political development in Egypt, New Delhi, 24 February 2011

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

- (a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the recent political developments in Egypt;
- (b) if so, the details and Government's reaction thereto;
- (c) whether it is a fact that many Indian nationals working in Egypt are affected by the uprising there; and

(d) if so, the details and measures that are being taken for the safety of Indian nationals in Egypt?

Answer: the Minister of state in the Ministry of external Affairs (Mr. E. Ahamed)

(a) & (b) Government are aware of the recent political developments in Egypt and Government conveyed its position and reaction on a number of occasions. As President Mubarak stepped down, Hon'ble External Affairs Minister said on 11 February 2011: "We welcome the decision of President Mubarak to step down in deference to the wishes of the people of Egypt. We also welcome the commitment of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces to ensure a peaceful transition of power in a time bound manner to establish an open and democratic framework of governance. We are proud of our traditionally close relations with the people of Egypt and wish them peace, stability and prosperity."

(c) & (d) Our Mission in Egypt is in constant contact with Indians residing there for their safety and security. There are about 3600 Indians in Egypt, out of which about 2200 are based in Cairo. Upon request of the Indian community in Egypt, three special flights were arranged by Air India, which carried around 670 Indians from Cairo to Mumbai. This was not 'evacuation' and Government only facilitated arrangement of the special flights of Air India to Cairo which brought back Indians desirous of returning to India. On 03 February 2011, Government also issued an advisory on travel of journalists to Egypt.

Government is closely monitoring the situation in Egypt, particularly with regard to the safety and security of the Indian community.

Source: Rajya Sabha (Council of States), Unstarred Question no.342 asked by Mr. K.E. Ismael and Mr. D. Raja, <http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=220117256>

8. Effect of ongoing struggle in Egypt, New Delhi, 24 February 2011

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

(a) whether a movement is going on in our traditional friend country, Egypt to change the 30 years old regime of Hosni Mubarak and the details of advice India has to give to Egypt in connection with the ongoing struggle;

(b) the number of Indians working in Egypt and whether all Indian residing there have been called back safely; and

(c) whether Indian companies and their employees working in Egypt are safe and whether Indian Government has ever made a request for the safety of Indians working there?

Answer: the Minister of state in the Ministry of external Affairs (Mr. E. Ahamed)

(a) Government are aware of the recent political developments in Egypt and Government conveyed its position and reaction on a number of occasions. As President Mubarak stepped down, Hon'ble External Affairs Minister said on 11 February 2011: "We welcome the decision of President Mubarak to step down in deference to the wishes of the people of Egypt. We also welcome the commitment of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces to ensure a peaceful transition of power in a time bound manner to establish an open and democratic framework of governance. We are proud of our traditionally close relations with the people of Egypt and wish them peace, stability and prosperity."

(b) & (c) There are about 3600 Indians in Egypt, out of which about 2200 are based in Cairo. Our Mission in Egypt is in constant touch with Indians residing there for their safety and security. Upon request of the Indian community in Egypt, three special flights were arranged by Air India, which carried around 670 Indians from Cairo to Mumbai. This was not 'evacuation' and Government only facilitated arrangement of the special flights of Air India to Cairo which brought back Indians desirous of returning to India.

Our Mission in Egypt is also in constant contact with the Egyptian authorities for the safety of Indian companies and their employees working there.

Government is closely monitoring the situation in Egypt, particularly with regard to the safety and security of the Indian community.

Source: Rajya Sabha (Council of States), Unstarred Question no.356 asked by Mr. Mohan Singh, <http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=220117286>

c. Libya

9. Indians safe in Libya - avoid non-essential travel, New Delhi, 20 February 2011

In response to a question the Official Spokesperson said,

"All Indians numbering around 18,000 are safe in Libya. We are following the situation closely. Presently disturbances have mainly been reported in north-eastern cities of Benghazi, Derna, Baida & Tubruk.

The Embassy of India in Tripoli has set up a round the clock control room which can be contacted for further information or assistance. The contact numbers are:

+218 213 409 288

+ 218 213 409 289

+ 218 213 409 284

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

Source: MEA, New Delhi, <http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=530217201>

10. India deplores use of force in Libya, New Delhi, 22 February 2011

The Government of India has been following, with serious concern, the developments in Libya, leading to loss of numerous lives and injuries to many more. The Government deplores the use of force which is totally unacceptable and must not be resorted to. It is earnestly hoped that calm is restored at the earliest without any further violence.

The Ministry and the Embassy of India in Tripoli are closely monitoring the situation and are in regular touch with representatives of the Indian community. Necessary measures, as warranted by the situation, would be taken by the Government to ensure the safety and welfare of Indian nationals.

Source: MEA, New Delhi, <http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=530217211>

11. Death of an Indian national in Libya due to road accident, New Delhi, 22 February 2011

The Embassy of India, Tripoli has conveyed the following regarding the death of an Indian national Mr. Murugaiah:

- During the night of Saturday, 19th February, a group comprising of three Indians and two Egyptians were trying to cross over to Egypt by car from Tobruk (city in northeastern Libya).
- Their car met with a head on collision resulting in all three Indians receiving serious injuries.
- They were admitted to Al Vatnam Medical Center in Tobruk. A number of Indian nurses are presently also working at the Center.
- Mr. Murugaiah reportedly succumbed to his injuries yesterday.
- The other Indian nationals are still in the hospital and recuperating.
- The Mission is in regular touch with the Medical Center.

· As such the story of Mr. Murugaiah's death being a result of firing appears to be incorrect.

Source: MEA, New Delhi, <http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=530217210>

12. Situation in Libya and evacuation of our nationals there, New Delhi, 24 February 2011

In view of the sharp and unprecedented deterioration in the situation inside Libya, Government has decided to immediately commence evacuation operations for our citizens in that country.

Evacuation is being arranged by sea and air. Government has chartered a passenger ferry with capacity to seat 1200 persons for this purpose. The ship, "Scotia Prince" is already in Egypt and readying for sail to Benghazi which will be the initial focus of the evacuation operations. MEA personnel and medical team will be on board to assist the evacuees.

SCOTIA PRINCE is expected to reach Benghazi by the 27th and bring back at least 1200 persons to Alexandria (Egypt) by 1st March 2011. They would be flown home from Alexandria thereafter, by special Air India flights, which are being arranged.

In Tripoli the focus will be on air evacuation. Aircraft are on standby for this purpose. Libyan landing clearance is awaited and should be received soon. Preparations are also in hand for evacuation of our nationals from cities in the interior where air access is possible subject to Libyan clearance. Indian companies, many of them working in Libya for decades have also offered to work with our Embassy in Tripoli in facilitating evacuation.

Ministry of External Affairs is coordinating closely with other Ministries including Defense, Overseas Indian Affairs and Shipping in making evacuation arrangements. Round the clock situation rooms in MEA and our Mission in Tripoli are functioning smoothly and addressing queries from families of our citizens in Libya. Our Embassies in Egypt and Tunisia are also alert to the situation and extending all assistance.

Source: MEA, New Delhi, <http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=530217227>

13. No charges or payment for evacuation from Libya, New Delhi, 25 February 2011

It has come to notice that some unscrupulous elements are asking for payments/handling charges/facilitation fee etc., for arranging evacuation of Indian nationals, through the Embassy of India in Libya. These activities are completely illegal and individuals engaged in them should be immediately reported to the law enforcement authorities.

It is further emphasized that NO payment or charge of any kind is being levied by the government, for the evacuation/assisted departure of any Indian national in Libya.

Source: MEA, New Delhi, <http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=530217252>

14. Update on situation in Libya and efforts to evacuate Indian nationals, New Delhi, 25 February 2011

Foreign Secretary Smt. Nirupama Rao met with senior officials today to review the developing situation in Libya and the efforts underway to facilitate the assisted departure (evacuation) of Indian nationals.

Two Air India aircrafts, a Boeing 747 and Airbus 330, are likely to leave Mumbai and New Delhi respectively, for Tripoli in the early hours of 26th February. Boeing 747 and Airbus 330 has a passenger capacity of 360 and 280 respectively. They are expected to return to India late in the evening tomorrow. Officials of Embassy in Tripoli are in touch with Indian community associations and will be at the airport to facilitate departure.

Scotia Prince the passenger ship chartered by Government of India is now expected to dock at Benghazi (Libya) on February 28th and bring back over 1200 passengers to Alexandria on 2nd March. Air India flights will thereafter fly them to India.

Around 150 Indian nationals from the Tobruk (Libya) are likely to travel by road to Salloum which is near the border with Egypt. They are being assisted by the Embassy of India and are likely to cross over in two batches on 26th and 28th February. At Salloum they would be met by Indian embassy personnel from Cairo, who are already in position. The Egyptian government has graciously agreed to facilitate visas on arrival at the border. Arrangements are being made for their travel onwards by road to Cairo and next by air to India. The Indian Navy vessel INS Jalashwa, accompanied by the INS Mysore, is expected to leave Mumbai shortly for Libya, to assist in the operations underway.

An Indian Air Force IL 76 aircraft is also on standby to meet additional transportation requirements wherever needed. Our embassies in Tripoli, Cairo and Tunis are working round the clock and the Government is doing its best to assist in the safe return of Indian nationals at the earliest.

Source: MEA, New Delhi, <http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=530217258>

15. Evacuation of Indian nationals from Libya- update # 1, New Delhi, 26 February 2011

The specially chartered Air India Boeing 747 with the capacity of 360 passengers, and an Airbus 330 with a capacity of 280, are en route to Tripoli and were to land shortly. They will return to New Delhi landing at Terminal 2, after picking up passengers at Tripoli. The expected time of arrival will be communicated as soon as known.

Additional MEA personnel are in position at the Embassy of India, Tripoli to enhance the manpower strength of the Mission.

INS Jalashwa, accompanied by the INS Mysore, set sail from Mumbai this morning. The sailing time is about twelve days to Libya.

Another passenger ship with a capacity of 1600, presently in the Mediterranean, is being chartered today and will be pressed into service for assisting the departure of our nationals out of Libya.

Scotia Prince is scheduled to depart for Benghazi (Libya) from Port Said (Egypt) today at 2000 hrs and is likely to arrive at its destination by the afternoon of Monday, 28th February 2011. The ship has a capacity of 1200 passengers.

Source: MEA, New Delhi, <http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=530217260>

16. Evacuation of Indians from Libya - update # 2, 26 February 2011

Sixty Seven Indian nationals including 11 children and 2 infants, crossed over from Tabrouk (Libya) to Salloum (Egypt) by road, via the land border this afternoon. They were received by the Embassy officials at the border, who also facilitated their immigration into Egypt. Eleven emergency certificates were issued on the spot to those who did not have passports.

They are now on their way to Cairo in two buses and should reach by late in the evening. Food and hotel accommodation at Cairo has been arranged. Mission has booked them for Mumbai by Gulf Air GF-056, which will arrive at 0505 hrs on Monday, 28 February 2011.

Another group of about 80 persons from Derna/Baida area in Libya are similarly expected to cross over some time on 28th February. They will also be extended necessary facilitation.

On the other hand, some Indian nationals are trying to cross over by the land route to Tunisia. Arrangements are being made to position Embassy of India officials at the Tunisian border, to receive and assist them with their onward journey by road to Tunis and then by air to India.

The Air India Boeing 744 flight from Tripoli is expected to reach New Delhi later in the evening. Ministry of Overseas Indians Affairs (MOIA) in coordination with MEA has made suitable arrangements to assist our nationals for travelling to their home stations.

Source: MEA, New Delhi, <http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=530217270>

17. Operation 'Safe Homecoming' gets underway - update # 1, 27 February 2011

Over 530 Indian nationals have arrived home safely from Tripoli in two Air India flights, the second of which landed in the wee hours of the morning today. They are all in good health and cheer. The passengers included a large number of women and children.

The Indian nationals were greeted on arrival by the Minister of State for External Affairs Mr. E Ahamed, Foreign Secretary Nirupama Rao, Secretary MOIA Didar Singh, senior officials of various central Ministries and state governments. Ten state governments have set up help desks at Terminal 2 to assist with food, accommodation, medical check up, transport and further travel arrangements of the passengers to their final destinations. All these facilities are being made available free of charge.

Terminal 2 was reactivated in just 24 hours by DIAL (Delhi International Airport) for the returnees from Libya and will be operational exclusively for handling all future dedicated flights. All concerned Ministries, Central Agencies, and State Governments have worked closely to put the reception arrangements in place, including the security agencies, BCAS (Bureau Civil Aviation Security) and CISF (Central Industrial Security Force).

Last evening, 88 persons have crossed over by road from Libya to Ras Jedir (Tunisia). They were received by officials of Embassy of India, Tunis, who have set up a camp there. All 88, who work for Punj Lloyd, have since been housed in 'Best Hotel' in Djerba (Tunisia), from where they are likely to be flown back to India soon. Another 170 persons are likely to reach Ras Jedir today.

Particulars of Embassy officials manning the Ras Jedir camp:

- Counsellor Balachandran Nair +216 9833 3403
- Vijay Khanna + 216 2496 2800

Contact particulars of Ambassador P.S. Randhawa in Tunis:

- Tel: + 216-71-781229

• Fax: + 216-71-281189

• Email: amb.tunis@mea.gov.in

Government of India has chartered a second passenger ship LA SUPERBA with a capacity of 1600. It is presently berthed in Sicily (Italy) and ready to sail to Libya as soon as port preparations are completed.

MV Scotia Prince set sail from Port Said (Egypt) at 2200hrs on 26th Feb and is reaching Benghazi (Libya) tomorrow, 28th February.

Source: MEA, New Delhi, <http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=530217261>

18. Operation 'Safe Homecoming' from Libya - update # 1, 28 February 2011.

Two special Air India flights – AI 800 (Airbus 330) and AI 171 (Boeing 744) are on their way to Tripoli, where they arrive at mid-day today. They are likely to ferry back around 600 passengers late tonight.

All 68 Indian nationals who had crossed over to Salloum (Egypt) reached Mumbai by GF-056 this morning. A help desk at the airport at Mumbai, has been set up by Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs (MOIA) in coordination with Government of Maharashtra and other State Governments, to render all assistance to the passengers including for further travel to their hometowns.

Another 82 Indians crossed over to Salloum late last evening. They are also being taken to Cairo and expected to leave by Gulf Air flight (GF-056) via Bahrain on Tuesday, so as to reach Mumbai on Wednesday 2nd March at 0505 hours.

The land route to Ras Jedir (Tunisia) is being put to good use by our nationals. According to latest information, a total of 378 individuals have already crossed over from Libya. The Embassy of India officials received them and assisted with their onward movement to and stay at Djerba (Tunisia). A special Air India flight is proposed to be pressed into service to fly them back to India. Another 100 persons are likely to similarly cross over today.

Indian officials are proceeding to Sicily (Italy) to speed up arrangements for passenger ship La Superba's maiden journey to Benghazi (Libya). Up to 3000 Indian nationals, including 400 who have travelled across from Al Kufrah by road, will be evacuated by Scotia Prince and La Superba.

Scotia Prince is expected to reach Benghazi at 1500 hours (local time) today and will return to Alexandria on 2nd March. Meanwhile Ambassador Rajiva Misra has reached Malta to set up yet another base camp for organizing sea shuttles between Libya and Malta. An air bridge is also proposed to be set up between Malta and India to bring our nationals home.

Source: MEA, New Delhi, <http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=530217282>

19. Operation 'Safe Homecoming' from Libya - update # 2, 28 February 2011

Both the special Air India flights from Tripoli – Airbus 330 and Boeing 747 – are on their way back to Terminal 2, Indira Gandhi International Airport, New Delhi. A 330 is expected to land around 0030 hrs and B 747 will follow in the early hours of the morning of Tuesday, 1st March, 2011. The first flight is carrying 266 passengers.

Terminal 2 has been especially re-activated by the Ministry of Civil Aviation and DIAL to handle dedicated relief flights carrying our nationals from Libya. Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs (MOIA), in close coordination with MEA, Ministry of Civil Aviation, other Central Ministries, State Governments and security agencies, has made standing arrangements for the reception and quick clearance of incoming passengers, as well as, for their onward transfer to home towns.

We are expecting 18 more Indians to cross over to Salloum (Egypt) by today evening. They would be similarly received and sent to Cairo for taking commercial flights back to India.

Scotia Prince is expected to dock at Benghazi shortly and should be returning to Alexandria on 2nd March.

Source: MEA, New Delhi, <http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=530217285>

d. Saudi Arabia

20. Indians in jails of Saudi Arabia, New Delhi, 24 February 2011

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

- (a) the details of Indians in jails/in detention in Saudi Arabia as on date;
- (b) since when each of them is in jail/in detention;
- (c) the charges against them;

- (d) the steps that have been taken to secure their release; and
- (e) the outcome thereof?

Answer: the Minister of state in the Ministry of external Affairs (Mr. E. Ahamed)

(a) & (b) As per the information provided to the Indian Mission in Riyadh by the concerned Saudi authorities, number of Indians arrested/convicted in the last three years are as below:-

Year	Number of persons arrested
2008	1549
2009	1519
2010	1156

Out of the above, a number of Indian nationals who have completed their jail term have left the Kingdom. It is estimated that there are around 1400 Indian nationals in various Saudi jails.

(c) A list of the details of charges on which the Indian nationals have been arrested in the last three years is attached at ANNEXURE-A.

(d) The Government of India through the Embassy of India in Riyadh and the Consulate General of India in Jeddah makes all possible efforts to get Indian nationals in Saudi jails released quickly and provide necessary assistance which includes requesting speedy trials, seeking consular access to the detainees and prisoners, providing advice/guidance in legal and other matters, seeking remission of sentence, interacting with their relatives in India, and facilitating repatriation of released prisoners to India. Indian Embassy and Consulate Officials visit various jails regularly and pursue the case with the authorities concerned for release, once their jail term is completed.

(e) In number of cases, Embassy in Riyadh and Consulate in Jeddah has been successful in resolving the cases barring those where a person has to undergo imprisonment under public rights (i.e. punishment as per the law of land).

Source: Rajya Sabha (Council of States), Unstarred Question no.346 asked by Mr. Mohammed Adeb, <http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=220117265>

e. Sudan

21. India welcomes successful referendum in Southern Sudan, New Delhi, 14 February 2011

India welcomes the successful conclusion of the referendum held in Southern Sudan in which its people have voted overwhelmingly for a separate state of South Sudan, in a credible and peaceful manner.

This is a momentous development in the history of South Sudan and India congratulates all concerned parties for conducting the proceedings peacefully and amicably, in achieving the important landmark of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement of 2005, which India fully supports.

India looks forward to working closely with and to extending all possible assistance to both sides in Sudan, with whom she has friendly and traditional ties.

Source: MEA, New Delhi, <http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=530217174>

f. Yemen

22. Helpline of Indian Embassy in Yemen and travel advisory, New Delhi, 20 February 2011

The Embassy of India in Sana'a has set up a 24 hour helpline which can be accessed for information or assistance. Contact details:

+967 711 880 938 (Mobile) Email: helpline@eosisanaa.com

There are around 14,000 Indians in Yemen who are reported to be safe. Ministry and the Embassy of India, Sana'a, are following the developments closely. Indian nationals are advised to avoid non-essential travel to Yemen for the present.

Source: MEA, New Delhi, <http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=530217202>

Specific Issues

g. Hajj

23. Difficulties faced by Hajj pilgrims, New Delhi, 23 February 2011

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

- (a) whether the Hajj pilgrims had to face difficulties in the year 2010;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether any report has been prepared in regard to ensuring that the Hajj pilgrims may not face difficulties in future; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

Answer: the Minister of state in the Ministry of external Affairs (Mrs. Preneet Kaur)

(a) & (b) A constant endeavour is made to ensure that Hajj Pilgrims do not face difficulties. For this purpose, the work of several agencies is coordinated so that the Hajj operations proceed as smoothly as possible. It is our understanding the Hajj operation in 2010 went off well though some pilgrims faced inconveniences which were addressed.

(c) & (d) Arrangements are reviewed at the Annual Hajj Review Meeting and remedial action is taken on the basis of feedback received.

Source: Lok Sabha (House of the People), unstarred Question no.427 asked by Mr. Arjun Meghwal, <http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=220217246>

24. Medical assistance during Hajj, New Delhi, 23 February 2011

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

(a) whether doctors and paramedical staff are sent on deputation for Hajj to extend medical assistance, if required, to the Hajjis who go for the pilgrimage;

(b) if so, the details of the total doctors and paramedical staff sent on deputation every year; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefore?

Answer: the Minister of state in the Ministry of external Affairs (Mrs. Preneet Kaur)

(a) Yes.

(b) Details are tabulated below:

Year	No. of doctors deputed	No. of paramedics deputed
Hajj – 2010	121	140
Hajj – 2009	110	142
Hajj – 2008	113	138
Hajj - 2007	115	141

(a) Does not arise.

Source: Lok Sabha (House of the People), unstarred Question no.235 asked by Mr. Hamdullah Sayeed, <http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=220217217>

25. Reforms in arrangements for Hajj, New Delhi, 24 February 2011

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

(a) whether it is a fact that reforms in arrangements for Hajj are long overdue; and

(b) if so, the steps Government proposes to take in the matter?

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

(a) & (b) The Hajj is one of the most complex organizational tasks undertaken by the Government of India outside its borders for which extensive arrangements are made both in India and Saudi Arabia. It is the constant endeavour of the Government to improve and reform the management of the arrangements for the Hajj pilgrimage in consultation with all concerned.

Source: Rajya Sabha (Council of States), Starred Question no.42 asked by Mr. Mohammed Adeb, <http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=220117251>

Multilateral Issues/ Regional Issues

h. India and the Middle East/ West Asia

26. Address by the Hon'ble President of India, Mrs. Pratibha Devisingh Patil, to Parliament, New Delhi, 21 February 2011

...My government has also broadened India's economic and political relations with the countries of the Gulf, West Asia, Central Asia and East Asia. My visits to China, our neighbour, and to Laos and Cambodia, promoted our links with an area which is increasingly important to India. The President of Indonesia was the Chief Guest at our Republic Day, and our relations with Malaysia, Vietnam and Japan, which were visited by the Prime Minister, continue to develop steadily.

Millions of our fellow citizens today work in the Gulf and West Asia. Indians overseas make valuable contributions to the countries of their residence and they do us proud. We will continue to work for the welfare of our diaspora, whose contributions to India we appreciate and whose links we will foster.

We have an abiding interest in peace, stability and development of countries in our extended neighbourhood. Egypt has recently seen momentous developments. As a democracy ourselves, we welcome the dawn of democracy elsewhere. My visits to the UAE and Syria significantly consolidated our relations, as did the Prime Minister's historic visit to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Source: Official Website of the President of India,
<http://presidentofindia.nic.in/sp210211.html>

27. Situation Room established in MEA, New Delhi, 21 February 2011

In view of the prevailing conditions in the Gulf, West Asian and North African regions and to provide necessary facilitation to members of Indian community, a round the clock 'Situation Room' has been set up in MEA.

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Source: MEA, New Delhi, <http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=530217205>

28. Suo Motu Statement by External Affairs Minister Mr. S.M. Krishna in Parliament, New Delhi, 23 February 2011

I rise to share with the House information on the efforts undertaken by my Ministry to assist Indians entrapped in recent crisis situations abroad.

The Hon'ble Members of Parliament are aware of the recent changes in Egypt. Upon request of the Indian community, three special flights were arranged by Air India, which carried around 670 Indians from Cairo to Mumbai. This was not 'evacuation' and Government only facilitated arrangement of the special flights of Air India to Cairo which brought back Indians desirous of returning to India.

Libya, Yemen and Bahrain are witnessing violent political protests. In these countries, there is a significant Indian community most of whom have gone there to earn their livelihood and have been contributing to the growth and development of the host country. The Governments of these countries have also acknowledged this fact.

In Libya, there are around 18,000 Indians; 14,000 in Yemen and in Bahrain, the number is over 350,000 who are reportedly safe. Our embassies have been in close and regular contact with the Indian community.

I have personally spoken to our Ambassadors in these countries and conveyed that all measures should be taken for the safety and welfare of our nationals there. The Ministry of External Affairs and the Embassies have set up round the clock helplines.

We also held inter-Ministerial meetings to take stock of the situation in the region and its impact on Indian and Indian origin community in the region and contingency plans required for them. We have also put in place plans for possible evacuation by land, air and sea from Libya. We have also issued travel advisories for our nationals to avoid non-essential travel to Bahrain, Yemen and Libya.

Source: MEA, New Delhi, <http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=530117221>

29. Political developments in Egypt/Arab countries, New Delhi, 23 February 2011

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

- (a) whether the attention of the Government has been drawn to the recent political developments in Egypt and other Arab countries;
- (b) if so, the reaction of the Government thereto;
- (c) whether thousands of Indians residing in these countries have been affected as a result thereof;

(d) if so, the details thereof along with the number of Indians evacuated from these countries and the financial and other assistance rendered to them; and

(e) the number of Indians still residing in such countries and the measures being taken by the Government to ensure their safety and security?

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

(a) & (b) Government are aware of the recent political developments in Egypt and other Arab countries particularly in Tunisia, Algeria, Yemen, Bahrain, Jordan and Libya. On developments in Egypt, Government conveyed its position and reaction on a number of occasions.

As President Mubarak stepped down, Hon'ble External Affairs Minister said on 11 February 2011: "We welcome the decision of President Mubarak to step down in deference to the wishes of the people of Egypt. We also welcome the commitment of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces to ensure a peaceful transition of power in a time bound manner to establish an open and democratic framework of governance. We are proud of our traditionally close relations with the people of Egypt and wish them peace, stability and prosperity."

(c) to (e) Our Missions in these countries are in constant contact with Indians residing there for their safety and security. As far as Egypt is concerned, there are about 3600 Indians out of which about 2200 based in Cairo. The Indian Mission in Cairo has taken measures for their safety and security. Upon request of the Indian community in Egypt to the Indian Mission in Cairo, three special flights were arranged by Air India, which carried around 670 Indians from Cairo to Mumbai. This was not 'evacuation' and Government only facilitated arrangement of the special flights of Air India to Cairo which brought back Indians desirous of returning to India. On 03 February 2011, Government also issued an advisory on travel of journalists to Egypt.

Government are closely monitoring the situation in these countries, particularly with regard to the safety and security of the Indian community.

Source: Lok Sabha (House of the People), Starred Question no.33 asked by Mr. Gurudas Dasgupta and Mr. Om Prakash Yadav, <http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=220217215>

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