



MEI INDIA SPEAKS

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No. 21

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Bilateral Issues

a. Bahrain

1. Minister of State for External Affairs Mr. E. Ahamed on safety of Indians in Bahrain, 14 March 2011

In response to query from Journalists regarding the safety of Indians in Bahrain, E. Ahamed, Minister of State for External Affairs said that:

- India is closely monitoring the evolving situation in Bahrain. I am in constant touch with our Ambassador and have asked him to stay closely in touch with the Indian community.
- The Indian community should follow the advice of our Embassy in Bahrain, which is to keep a low profile, stay indoors and to avoid all non-essential travel within the country.

*Source: Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), New Delhi,
<http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=530117386>*

2. Ambassador calls on Prime Minister of Bahrain – assured of safety of Indian nationals, New Delhi, 17 March 2011

The Ambassador of India, Bahrain called on the Prime Minister H.H. Sheikh Khalifa Bin Salman Al Khalifa today. He was assured by the Prime Minister that the Bahraini authorities will do everything in their power to ensure the safety and security of Indians living in the country.

2. The Government continues to carefully monitor the security situation in Bahrain and will issue suitable travel advisories should it become necessary. Until then, the present advisory which asks Indians in Bahrain to keep a low profile, stay indoors and to avoid all non-essential travel within

the country stands. The Indian Embassy has also advised the Indian associations that those family members and others whose presence in Bahrain is not necessary should consider leaving the country, if so inclined.

3. Round the clock Help lines have been set up in MEA and the Embassy of India, Bahrain as per following details:-

Ministry of External Affairs
Phones - +91 11 2301 5300
+91 11 2301 2113
+91 11 2301 4104
+91 112301 8179
Fax.No. +91 11 2301 8158
Email: controlroom@mea.gov.in

Embassy of India, Bahrain
Mobile +973 3982 8767
Phone +973 17712785
Fax.No.+973 17715527
Email: indemcon@batelco.com.bh

Source: MEA, New Delhi, <http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=530217429>

3. Indian national in Bahrain gets caught in cross fire – succumbs to injuries, New Delhi, 18 March 2011

In response to a question, regarding a media report about the death of an Indian national in Bahrain, the Official Spokesperson said,

“In a unfortunate incident on 16th late evening, Mr. Stephen Abraham, an Indian national, working with Al Moyad Construction Company in Bahrain, was caught in a cross fire while being outdoors, and succumbed to his injuries. The Embassy of India in Bahrain, immediately got in touch with the local authorities who are extending all cooperation. We would like to offer our heartfelt condolences to members of the bereaved family.’

Source: MEA, New Delhi, <http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=530217432>

4. Opening remarks by External Affairs Minister Mr. S.M. Krishna during visit of Foreign Minister of Bahrain, New Delhi, 30 March 2011

It is with great pleasure that I extend a warm welcome to H.E. Shaikh Khalid Bin Ahmed Bin Mohamed Al Khalifa, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Bahrain to India.

India and Bahrain enjoy warm and friendly relations which are based on our historical and civilisational ties. The presence of a large Indian community in Bahrain represents a living link

which nurtures this long-standing relationship. We are indeed thankful to the Government and the people of Bahrain for extending a warm welcome to the sizeable Indian community there who in turn have contributed through their dedication and hard work to Bahrain's development. This contribution has been recognized by the Bahraini leadership and we thank them for their continued support to the Indian community.

The visit of H.E. Shaikh Khalid is part of the tradition of having high level visits in order to exchange views on matters of mutual interest. I once again extend him a very warm welcome and invite him to share his thoughts with you.

Source: MEA, New Delhi, <http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=530117485>

5. Visit of Foreign Minister of Bahrain to India, New Delhi, 30 March 2011

As part of the regular high level exchanges between India and Bahrain, H.E. Shaikh Khalid Bin Ahmed Bin Mohamed Al-Khalifa, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Bahrain is visiting India from March 29-31, 2011.

India and Bahrain enjoy traditionally friendly relations which are based on historical and civilisational ties. The presence of a large Indian community in Bahrain represents a living link which nurtures this long standing relationship.

The Bahraini Foreign Minister met External Affairs Minister S.M. Krishna on 30th March 2011 and had detailed discussions on issues of mutual interest including recent developments in Bahrain and the region. The External Affairs Minister also hosted a lunch in honour of the visiting dignitary.

The Bahraini Foreign Minister conveyed the firm assurance of the Bahraini leadership about ensuring the safety and security of the Indian community numbering well over 350,000 and appreciated their contribution to the progress and development of Bahrain. In this context, the Bahraini Foreign Minister referred to his meeting with over 200 members of the Indian community on 26th March 2011 in Manama. External Affairs Minister thanked his counterpart for this reassurance with regard to the Indian community's well-being and expressed confidence that the law-abiding Indian community would continue to be a partner in Bahrain's growth story well into the future.

The Bahraini Foreign Minister briefed External Affairs Minister about the recent developments in the country. External Affairs Minister expressed the hope that the peaceful resolution of all issues through dialogue would pave the way for the continued economic development and prosperity of the friendly people of Bahrain.

The Deputy National Security Advisor Ms. Vijaya Latha Reddy called on the Bahraini Foreign Minister in the morning of 30th March 2011 and discussed issues of bilateral interest. The visit of the Bahraini Foreign Minister has further reinforced and strengthened the excellent relationship existing between the two countries.

Source: MEA, New Delhi, <http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=530217486>

b. Egypt

6. Protection of Indians in Egypt, New Delhi, 3 March 2011

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

- (a) the steps taken by India to protect its citizens in the aftermath of ongoing change of regime and local riots, in Egypt;
- (b) the number of Indians brought to India from Egypt, so far;
- (c) whether Indian High Commissioner is demanding 45,000/- for air tickets from Indian nationals living in Egypt;
- (d) if not, the fare being charged from them; and
- (e) the details thereof?

Answer: The Minister of State in the Ministry of External Affairs (Mr. E. Ahmed)

(a) Though the situation in Egypt remains calm after President Mubarak stepped down on 11 February 2011, Government are closely following the developments in Egypt particularly with regard to safety and security of the Indian community. There are about 3600 Indians in Egypt, of whom about 2200 are based in Cairo.

(b) to (e) 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. These three special flights operated by Air India for bringing back Indians desirous of returning to India, were non-scheduled, commercial flights. This was not 'evacuation' and Government only facilitated arrangement of the special flights of Air India to Cairo. As mentioned by Air India and Ministry of Civil Aviation, the fare charged was only to cover the direct cost of operating the flight on a 'no profit' basis.

Source: Rajya Sabha (Council of States), Unstarred Question no. 815 asked by Dr. Yogendra P. Trivedi, <http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=220117326>

7. Impact of Agitation in Egypt on Fertilizers Output, New Delhi, 3 March 2011

Some of the manufacturers of Single Super Phosphate (SSP) and phosphatic fertilizers import Rock Phosphate from Egypt. Generally, annual import from Egypt is about 9 lakh metric tons.

Small quantity of Urea, Sulphur and Ammonia is also imported from Egypt. Further, Suez Canal touching Egypt is one of the major routes for shipping of raw materials for the fertilizer industry in our country. Due to current situation in Egypt, it is apprehended that import of fertilizer inputs may be adversely affected for some time. Import of fertilizer raw materials, such as Rock Phosphate, Sulphur and Ammonia in Open General List (OGL). It is expected that our domestic fertilizer industry would source these inputs from other alternative sources to minimize impact of the situation.

This information was given by the Minister of State for Chemicals and Fertilizers Shri Srikant Kumar Jena in a written reply in the Lok Sabha today.

Source: PIB, New Delhi,
<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=70459>

8. Effects of unrest in Egypt on trade and relations, New Delhi, 10 March 2011

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

- (a) the country's role regarding Egypt after current scenario of change of power there;
- (b) whether it would have any impact upon Indo-Egypt relation and trade; and
- (c) if so, the details thereof?

Answer: The Minister of State in the Ministry of External Affairs (Mr. E. Ahmed)

(a) to (c) The situation in Egypt is calm after President Mubarak stepped down on 11 February 2011. The Supreme Council of Armed Forces is overseeing transition to a democratic system in Egypt. The Government of India continues to monitor the developments in Egypt so that no adverse impact is felt on our bilateral relationship including political and economic ties. There are about 3600 Indians in Egypt, of whom about 2200 are based in Cairo. Government have conveyed its readiness to extend whatever support possible particularly with regard to the electoral process in Egypt, considering India's rich and past experience in this field. While Egypt has welcomed India's offer, the Government of India is awaiting response from the Government of Egypt.

Source: Rajya Sabha (Council of States), Unstarred Question no. 1589 asked by Dr. Yogendra P. Trivedi, <http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=220117400>

9. Indian Companies in Egypt, New Delhi, 14 March 2011

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

- (a) whether the Ministry has made any assessment on the Indian companies in Egypt in view of turmoil there;
- (b) if so, the details thereof and the manner in which the Government of India is helping Indian companies to meet the crisis in Egypt;
- (c) whether it is true that the industry associations are foreseeing blocking of Suez Canal which is the primary link between Asia and Europe;
- (d) if so, the details thereof;
- (e) the likely impact on Indian Industry and the corrective steps being taken in this regard; and
- (f) the details of bilateral trade between India and Egypt?

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

(a) & (b): Yes Madam. The Embassy of India, Egypt, was operating a twenty-four hour Control Room and contacted all the companies partly or wholly owned by Indians or NRIs in Egypt to assess whether they had suffered any damage. The Indian owners of those Companies who wanted to temporarily leave Egypt were helped by the Embassy by arranging special Air India aircraft. Further, the Embassy also took up the cases of those Indian Companies who had apprehensions about their security or unreasonable demands from disgruntled local elements with the Egyptian Trade & Industry Ministry, the Egyptian General Authority for Foreign Investment and also with the Egyptian Armed Forces. The Egyptian authorities deployed army vehicles and army personnel at the factory premises of few Indian Companies at the request of Indian Mission there. Some of the Indian companies temporarily shut their operations for lack of raw material or for the fear of labour unrest or out of security concern while some continued their operations at a reduced scale. Most of the Indian companies have restarted their operations by now.

(c): No, Madam.

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

(f): The details of the bilateral trade between India and Egypt are as per the Statement annexed.

Source: Lok Sabha (House of the People), Unstarred Question no.2779 asked by Mr. Rajgopal Lagadapati and Mr. P. Viswanathan

10. Democratic setup in Egypt, New Delhi, 16 March 2011

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

(a) whether the Government has offered to help Egypt in establishing a democratic set up in that country; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

Answer: The Minister of State in the Ministry of External Affairs (Mr. E. Ahmed)

(a) & (b) The Government has conveyed its readiness to extend support to the Government of Egypt with regard to the electoral process. While Egypt has welcomed the offer, response from the Egyptian government is awaited.

Source: Lok Sabha (House of the People), Unstarred Question no. 3288 asked by Mr. Bhakta Charan Das, <http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=220217427>

11. Minister of State for External Affairs Mr. E. Ahamed arrives Egypt for a two-day visit, Cairo, 29 March 2011

The Minister of State for External Affairs of India, Mr. E. Ahamed arrived in Egypt on the evening of 29 March 2011.

Minister Ahamed is on a two-day visit to Egypt to hold consultations with the new Government and to reiterate India's desire to strengthen its mutually beneficial ties with Egypt which is in the process of establishing a new democratic framework of governance.

The visiting Minister will call on Prime Minister of Egypt Dr. Essam Sharaf, Deputy Prime Minister Dr. Yehia Al Gamal and Foreign Minister Dr. Nabil El Araby. He will also be meeting the Grand Sheikh of Al Azhar Dr. Ahmed Mohammed Ahmed El Tayeb, Secretary General of the Arab League, Mr. Amr Moussa and Dr. El Baradei.

Minister Ahamed is also expected to interact with the Egyptian Ministers of Trade & Industry, Communications & Information Technology, Agriculture as well as Planning & International Cooperation.

India and Egypt have traditionally enjoyed close and friendly relations. India has always viewed Egypt as a country which has an important and stabilising role in the region. Both India and Egypt have consistently played a pioneering role in championing the cause of the developing world and non-aligned countries.

Minister Ahamed on his arrival made a statement that India welcomes the choice made by the people of Egypt, and the popular will to usher in change and noted that it was remarkable that these changes are being achieved through peaceful means. He said that India stands ready to support the Egyptian people and nation during the transition period.

Source: MEA, New Delhi, <http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=530217484>

12. Minister of State for External Affairs Mr. E. Ahamed visits Egypt – meets PM and other leaders, Cairo, 31 March 2011

The Minister of State for External Affairs, Mr. E. Ahamed who is on a two-day visit to Egypt (30-31 March) met the Egyptian Prime Minister Dr. Essam Sharaf, the Deputy Prime Minister, Dr. Yehiah Al Aziz El Gamal and the Secretary General of The League of Arab States, Mr. Amr Moussa in Cairo today. The visit represents the first ministerial level contact between India and Egypt since the January 25 events.

During the meetings, MOS conveyed to PM Sharaf and Deputy PM Gamal India's continued support to Egypt during its historic transition process. India looks forward to further strengthening its relationship with Egypt that would contribute to peace and prosperity in the region.

He held detailed discussions with the Egyptian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Nabil El-Araby yesterday. In addition to strengthening and deepening the bilateral relations, both the Ministers decided to have increased coordination on international issues. The next round of Political Consultations between the two countries would take place in May 2011 in New Delhi. A visit to India by the Egyptian Foreign Minister, is being planned. A delegation led by the Election Commissioner of India is also expected to visit Egypt to explore cooperation in the electoral process which would include demonstration of the use of Electronic Voting Machines (EVM).

MOS also called on the Grand Sheikh of Al Azhar, His Eminence Dr. Ahmed Al-Tayyib and interalia invited the latter to visit India to attend an important conference in Kerala in May 2011. The invitation was accepted.

MOS also had a meeting with Nobel Laureate Dr. Elbaradei on the democratic transition process in Egypt.

Source: MEA, New Delhi, <http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=530217492>

c. Iran

13. Dispute on Payment over Oil imported from Iran, New Delhi, 1 March 2001

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

- (a) whether Government is sending an Indian delegation to Tehran to find a solution to payment problems regarding crude oil imported from Iran;
- (b) if so, the details thereof; and
- (c) the quantum of amount to be paid by Government for crude oil imported from Tehran and the quantum of oil imported from Iran?

Answer: Minister of State in the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas (Mr. R.P.N. Singh)

(a) & (b): A composite Indian delegation consisting of representatives of different Ministries and organizations visited Iran under the leadership of Additional Secretary, Department of Financial Services, Ministry of Finance during 14th -17th January, 2011. The delegation held discussions with Iranian authorities on various issues, including inter alia, the problem of payment for oil that India is importing from Iran.

(c): The quantum of crude oil imports and the corresponding value (US \$ million) is given in the Annexure.

Annexure

ANNEXURE REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PART (c) OF THE RAJYA SABHA UNSTARRED QUESTION NO.736 FOR REPLY ON 1.3.2011

Name of oil Company	2010-11 (Till 31.12.2010)	
	Quantity of Crude Oil imported from Iran (in TMT)	Value (in Million US \$)
Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOCL)	2042.00	1208.00
Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL)	277.57	160.72
Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited (HPCL)	2772.74	1670.72
Mangalore Refinery and Petrochemicals Limited (MRPL)	5380.00	3041.54

TMT = Thousand Metric Tonne.

Source: Rajya Sabha (Council of States), Starred Question no. 736 asked by Mr. Ishwarlal Shankarlal Jain and Mr. Govindrao Adik

14. Indo-Iran Gas Pipeline Project, New Delhi, 3 March 2011

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

- (a) the present status of the Iran-Pakistan-India (IPI) Gas Pipeline Project;
- (b) whether the Government has entered into any meaningful talk or signed any treaty with the beneficiary countries in this regard;
- (c) if so, the details thereof;

(d) whether the Government has estimated the cost of the project; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

Answer: Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas (Mr. S. Jaipal Reddy)

(a) to (e); A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PARTS (a) to (e) OF THE LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO.112 ASKED BY SHRI ANTO ANTONY AND SHRI ANANDRAO ADSUL, MPs TO BE ANSWERED ON MARCH 3, 2011

(a) to (c): Government is trying to ensure import of natural gas through transnational gas pipelines, including from Iran through the Iran-Pakistan- India (IPI) Gas Pipeline Project. Various important issues, viz., pricing of gas, delivery point of gas, project structure, payment of transportation tariff and transit fees for passage of natural gas through Pakistan, security of supply, etc., are under discussion amongst the participating countries. No agreement relating to the Project has been signed so far.

(d) & (e): The Project is estimated to cost around US \$ 7 billion.

Source: Lok Sabha (House of the People), Starred Question no. 112 asked by Mr. Anto Antony and Mr. Ananandarao Vithoba Adsul

15. Import of Oil from Iran, New Delhi, 3 March 2011

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

(a) whether India and Iran have arrived at an agreement for supply of crude oil;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the mode of payments agreed upon;

(c) the manner in which Iran was paid for crude oil imports earlier;

(d) whether there was any disagreement between the two countries in respect of the mode of payment for supply of crude oil;

(e) if so, the details thereof; and

(f) the manner it was resolved?

Answer: Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas (Mr. S. Jaipal Reddy)

(a) to (f): A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PARTS (a) TO (f) OF THE LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO. 119 ASKED BY SHRI ADHALRAO PATIL SHIVAJI AND SHRI DUSHYANT SINGH TO BE ANSWERED ON 3.3.2011 REGARDING `IMPORT OF OIL FROM IRAN`.

(a) to (c): The Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) viz. Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOCL), Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL), Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited (HPCL), Mangalore Refinery and Petrochemicals Limited (MRPL), and Essar Oil Limited (EOL) enter into term contracts with the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) for import of Crude Oil. The quantity of crude oil (in Million Metric Tonne) imported by these companies during the last 2 years and the current year is given below in the table:

Year	IOCL	BPCL	HP CL	MRPL	Reliance	EOL	Total
2008-2009	1.8	0.4	1.4	8.0	4.4	5.3	21.3
2009-2010	2.5	0.0	3.2	6.9	3.3	5.3	21.2
2010-11(till September 2010)	1.0	0.3	1.3	3.3	0.0	3.0	8.9

The payments to Iran (NIOC) upto 22.12.2010 were being made through the Asian Clearing Union (ACU) Mechanism.

(d) to (f): Consequent to the withdrawal of the Asian Clearing Union mechanism by the Reserve Bank of India with effect from 23.12.2010, all payments to Iran for import of crude oil have to be settled in any permitted currency outside the ACU mechanism. To work out the payment modalities, a composite Indian delegation consisting of representatives of different Ministries and organizations visited Iran under the leadership of Additional Secretary, Department of Financial Services, Ministry of Finance during 14th - 17th January 2011. The delegation held discussions with Iranian authorities to resolve payment issues for import of oil by India. Pending dues of NIOC are now being cleared and as of 1.3.2011, payment of Euro 1.5 billion has been made to the Central Bank of Iran.

Source: Lok Sabha (House of the People), Starred Question no. 119 asked by Mr. Shivaji Adhalrao Patil and Mr. Dushyant Singh

16. Iranian Crude Oil, New Delhi, 4 March 2011

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

- (a) whether Reserve Bank of India (RBI) had disallowed payments for Iranian Crude Oil;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether the decision had been welcomed by the United States of America (USA) administration;
- (d) if so, the facts in this regard and the reasons therefore;
- (e) whether any alternative arrangement for the payment has been made; and
- (f) if so, the details thereof?

Answer: The Minister of State in the Ministry of Finance (Mr. Namo Narain Meena)

(a) to (f): Till recently, payments for oil were routed through the Asian Clearing Union (ACU) Mechanism. However, the European Council (EC) regulation which came into effect on 25.10.2010, required prior authorisation for payments to listed entities of Iran. ACU, being a multilateral net clearing system, did not facilitate such authorization. Hence, payments to Iran were allowed to be settled outside the ACU mechanism with effect from 23.12.2010. Reserve Bank of India (RBI) advised the Authorized Dealers that the payment for import of Oil should be settled in any permitted currency outside ACU for the present. In the meantime, arrangements have been made to pay the arrears in respect of oil imports through European banks after complying with EU Regulations. Efforts are on to find suitable mechanism for payment of current / future oil imports.

Source: Lok Sabha (House of the People), Unstarred Question no. 1481 asked by Mr. Anant Kumar Hegde and Mr. Murli Manohar Joshi,

17. Mode of Payment for Iranian Oil, New Delhi, 15 March 2011

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

- (a) whether payment to Iran, one of the leading countries exporting crude oil to India is being made through Asian Clearing Union (ACU) system since 1976;
- (b) whether RBI has stated that payments for oil and other important things to Iran will be made outside of ACU;
- (c) whether National Iranian Oil Company, a Public Sector Oil Company of Iran has stated that it would discontinue the supply of oil to India if payment is not guaranteed by RBI;

(d) the reasons why RBI make payments for oil and other important things to Iran outside of ACU; and

(e) the reaction of Government thereto?

Answer: Minister of State in the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas (Mr. R.P.N. Singh)

(a) & (b): Yes, Madam. Payment to the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC), Iran upto 22.12.2010 were being made through the Asian Clearing Union (ACU) mechanism. Consequent to the withdrawal of the Asian Clearing Union mechanism by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) with effect from 23.12.2010, all payments to Iran for import of crude oil have to be settled in any permitted currency outside the ACU mechanism.

(c) to (e): Consequent upon the tightening of the sanctions by the US and other western powers, Deutsche Bundes Bank (DBB) that had been entertaining Indian payments under the ACU mechanism declined to process future payments stating that India would have to provide certification that all payments are related to oil. On 23.12.2010, RBI decided that all Current Account Trade with Iran should be settled outside ACU in any permitted currency. To work out the payment modalities, a composite Indian delegation consisting of representatives of different Ministries and organizations visited Iran under the leadership of Additional Secretary, Department of Financial Services, Ministry of Finance during 14th – 17th January 2011. The delegation held discussions with Iranian authorities to resolve payment issues for import of oil by India. Pending dues of NIOC are now being cleared and as of 1.3.2011, payment of Euro 1.5 billion has been made to the Central Bank of Iran.

Source: Rajya Sabha (Council of States), Unstarred Question no.2137 asked by Mr. Motilal Bora and Mr. Satyavrat Chaturvedi

d. Libya

18. Operation 'Safe Homecoming' - update, New Delhi, 1 March 2011

597 Indian nationals flew back home on two special Air India flights earlier in the morning from Tripoli. They were received warmly on arrival by Minister MOIA and Civil Aviation Mr. Vayalar Ravi, Secretary MOIA, officials of the Central and State governments at Terminal 2, Indira Gandhi International Airport, New Delhi, which has been specially readied for the purpose.

Arrangements have since been finalized with Libya to receive three special flights daily from India at Tripoli over the next ten days. In addition, we are exploring possibilities of establishing air bridges with Sirte and Sebha in Libya. This should appreciably speed up the process of evacuating our nationals from Libya.

Scotia Prince docked at 1800 hrs (LT) at Benghazi (Libya) yesterday. Passengers have started boarding. The ship is setting sail for Alexandria around noon (local time), with an estimated 1,188 Indian nationals on board.

An additional 21 of our nationals crossed over to Salloum (Egypt) yesterday by road and have been moved to Cairo. They will leave today for Mumbai by Gulf Air, along with 85 more Indian nationals who had similarly reached Cairo yesterday morning.

Source: MEA, New Delhi, <http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=530217293>

19. Operation 'Safe Homecoming' – update, New Delhi, 2 March 2011

The pace of the relocation of Indian nationals out of Libya has gathered momentum over the past 24 hours. Three special Air India flights – two Boeing 747s and one Airbus-330 – went to Tripoli yesterday and brought back 1045 Indian nationals in the early hours today. All flights landed at Terminal-2, Indira Gandhi International Airport, New Delhi. Another three flights have left for Tripoli and are expected to ferry back 1002 passengers. Three daily flights shall continue to Tripoli over the coming days and may even be stepped up further.

MV Scotia Prince sailed out of Benghazi (Libya) with 1188 persons on board yesterday. It is likely to reach Alexandria (Egypt) around 2000 hrs (2330 hrs IST) today. Four special flights will bring them to India tomorrow, 3rd March, 2011.

Separately, a charter flight carrying 78 Indians from Sirte (Libya) arrived at Larnaca (Cyprus) last evening. Our High Commission in Nicosia received them and is booking them on commercial flights to India. So far 126 Indians have left Libya in small numbers on their own, in coordination with our Missions in and around Libya.

267 Indians have, by now, crossed over to Salloum (Egypt) by the land route. Our Mission in Cairo has already facilitated the return of some 180 of them in batches, to Mumbai, by regular Gulf Air flights.

Furthermore, close to 1,400 persons have reached Djerba, where our Embassy personnel from Tunis have assisted them to be housed in local hotels. Special flights are also being scheduled to bring them back home soon.

By the end of the day today, 6177 Indian nationals will have been pulled out of Libya. This constitutes just over a third of the estimated 18,000 Indian nationals in Libya.

Source: MEA, New Delhi, <http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=530217310>

20. Operation 'Safe Homecoming' – Update, New Delhi, 3 March 2011

The air-bridge between Tripoli and Delhi, already picking up over a thousand Indian nationals daily out of Libya, is being supplemented tomorrow by another Boeing 747. Three Air India flights - two Boeing 747s and one Airbus-330 - arrived, as usual, this morning from Tripoli with 1050 passengers on board. Arrangements are being made to send them to their home towns.

Ministry has also pressed into service another ferry ship, reaching Misurata (Libya) from Malta by midday on Friday, March 4 and is expected to return to Malta in the forenoon of Saturday March 5. Kingfisher and Jet Airways aircrafts will then fly out the Indian nationals from Valetta.

MV Scotia Prince reached Alexandria last evening with 1188 passengers. Five air sorties including four Egypt Air special flights are bringing the passengers home. The indicative flight schedule is:

	No. of Passengers	ETD(all from Alexandria)	ETA	Flight no.
Chartered Flight No. 1	196 passengers	1200 hrs	2130 hrs. Delhi	IT9002
Chartered Flight No. 2	265 passengers	1400 hrs.	2300 hrs. Mumbai	MS3280
Chartered Flight No. 3	265 passengers	1500 hrs.	0001 hrs. Mumbai	MS 3285
4 March 2011				
Chartered Flight No. 4	265 passengers	0430 hrs	1330 hrs. Mumbai	MS 3282
Chartered Flight No. 5	Rest of passengers (197)	0530 hrs.	1430 hrs. Mumbai	MS 3287

MV Scotia Prince is scheduled to return to Benghazi (Libya) by daylight March 5, to bring back the next batch of passengers to Alexandria.

An IAF IL-76 (Gajraj) has been positioned in Egypt to assist in the current operations.

Besides the initiative of Indian companies such as DS Construction, Punj Llyod and MN Dastur and Co. in flying out their professionals and workers, the Indian Embassy in Tunis is assisting with special flights out of Tunis and Djerba. Our Embassy in Cairo is similarly continuing to assist Indian nationals crossing the Libyan border at Salloum to take commercial flights to Indian destinations from Cairo.

Source: MEA, New Delhi , <http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=530217316>

21. Statement by Minister of State for External Affairs Mrs. Preneet Kaur in Rajya Sabha on the evacuation of Indian nationals from Libya, New Delhi, 4 March 2011

Sir,

I rise to share with the house information on the efforts undertaken by the Ministry of External Affairs and other GOI Ministries and Departments, to assist in the evacuation of Indian nationals from Libya.

In view of the disturbed conditions in Libya, the Government of India took the decision to relocate Indian nationals out of Libya and assist in their return home. The first special flight of Air India left Libya on February 26. Since then, an air bridge has been established between Tripoli and Delhi.

By the end of the day today, 9,209 Indian nationals would have been evacuated out of Libya, including 1,450 out of Tripoli and Sebha by Air India flights. We expect to complete the exercise of evacuating all those desirous of leaving Libya by March 10. It may be noted that some Indian nationals have opted to stay on Libya.

A passenger ship, Scotia Prince, has also ferried 1,188 Indians from Benghazi to Alexandria in Egypt from where they arrived in Mumbai and Delhi by special flights organized by the Government yesterday and early this morning. The ship turned around from Alexandria last night at 2330 hrs for Benghazi, from where we are coordinating the transport of another 1,150 of our nationals back to India via Alexandria. The ship will dock at Benghazi early morning tomorrow.

As we speak, a passenger ship, Red Star One, is also on its way to Misurata and Sirte to ferry Indian nationals to Malta from where special flights are being arranged out of Valletta to bring them back. An air bridge is also being put in place from late tonight between Sebha and India and we hope to evacuate about 2000 Indian nationals from there over the next 5 days, beginning today.

We have confirmed reports that 750 or so Indian nationals from Kufra in South East Libya have reached Benghazi by the land route. They will now be picked up by the passenger vessel en route to Benghazi.

A large number of Indian nationals have crossed the Libyan border into Tunisia and Egypt. They have been assisted at the border by Indian Embassy officials to be issued travel documents,

temporarily housed in hotels and other shelters and provided assistance for their return to India by commercial and special flights. Similar assistance has also been provided by our Missions to Indian who managed to reach other countries such as Malta, Greece, Gulf States etc.

We have taken special care, in association with the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs, that returning passenger to India are facilitated at Delhi and Mumbai airports. At the Delhi airport a special terminal has been made available for the returnees, who are being met by the concerned company representatives and assisted by officials of the respective State Governments, the Ministry of External Affairs and the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs.

An IAF IL 76 aircraft has been stationed in Cairo to undertake possible evacuation operations from Libya. A second IL 76 aircraft has also been put on readiness to be dispatched as and when the need arises. Two ships of the Indian Navy – INS Jalashwa and INS Mysore are en route and are expected to be in the region by March 8 to assist in the evacuation operations of any Indians that might still be in the coastal towns of Libya.

As part of the effort to ensure the safe and orderly evacuation of Indian nationals from Libya, External Affairs Minister spoke to his Libyan counterpart on March 2. The Libyan Foreign Minister assured EAM that all Libyan authorities concerned would extend every possible assistance for this purpose.

As assured by EAM, the cost towards evacuation of Indians from Libya assisted by Government in their safe and orderly return to India is being met by the Government.

Hon'ble members are aware of the complicated situation in Libya. The security of Indian nationals and their safe return to India is Government's foremost priority. Despite considerable logistical challenges the Government has put in place a well coordinated operation 'safe home coming' to bring home our nationals in the quickest and safest manner possible. I hope the house will join me I extending support to all those involved in this operation for the safe return of Indian nationals from Libya.

Thank You.

Source: MEA, New Delhi, <http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=530117338>

22. Operation 'Safe Homecoming' – Update, New Delhi, 5 March 2011

The pace of evacuation from Libya has been stepped up even further. Already over 9200 of our nationals have left Libya on 24 special flights, ships, commercial carriers and by road, since the process began on 26 February.

In the past 24 hours, two AI special flights (from Tripoli), one from Sebha (Libya) and three from Djerba (Tunisia) have arrived in India.

In a welcome development, a 747 aircraft landed at Sebha (Libya) yesterday and has brought home some 350 passengers to Mumbai. Another sortie is being undertaken today.

In parallel, 220 Indians returned to Mumbai today from Tunisia (via Dubai) on an Emirates flight. Another chartered Egypt Air and fly Dubai flights, flew-in 170 and 190 persons respectively, to India from Djerba (Tunisia).

MV Scotia Prince has since sailed back for Benghazi from Alexandria to bring back the remaining passengers. It is expected to reach Benghazi around 1600 hrs (LT) today.

The number of our nationals taking the land route to Salloum (Egypt) is growing steadily. A record high of 191 crossed over on 3rd evening and 12 on 4th. All of them were assisted by officials of Embassy of India, Cairo, with visas on arrival, comfortable transport to Cairo, hotel stay and onward booking on commercial flights for travel to India. So far 467 persons have been facilitated by the Mission at the Salloum border.

Dastur Engineering International (DEI) has separately brought out 66 Indian nationals by a catamaran from Misurata (Libya) to Malta and is sending them to India in batches on Emirates Airlines. All of them are expected to return by today.

MV Red Star One is at Misurata (Libya) and would sail to Malta with some 400 passengers. Arrangements are in place for flying them to India from Malta on two chartered aircrafts of Kingfisher and Jet Airways.

Source: MEA, New Delhi, <http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=530217344>

23. Operation 'Safe Homecoming' – Update, 6 March 2011

A record number of over 2300 Indians nationals were evacuated from Libya in the preceding 24 hours. Three special AI flights from Tripoli and one from Sebha (Libya), besides the *Red Star One* ferry (from Misurata) accomplished this task.

By late evening today more than 2/3rd of our nationals would have been pulled out of Libya, totaling over 12,000.

The second Boeing 747 sortie brought home another 400 passengers from Sebha (Libya) to Mumbai. Daily sorties have been scheduled to evacuate all the remaining persons from Sebha, over the next few days.

Fly Dubai will undertake further daily sorties to clear out the remaining 360 passengers from Djerba (Tunisia). 580 persons have already returned to India from Tunis, in the last couple of days.

In the second round, *MV Scotia Prince* picked up all the remaining 972 of our nationals from Benghazi (Libya) and is headed back to Alexandria, where it is expected to reach in the afternoon of 7th March. The passengers will be flown back to India on 4 special flights (one of them IL76) on 8th and 9th March.

MV Red Star One commenced its return journey to Malta from Misurata (Libya) at 1730 hrs (LT) yesterday, with all the 301 Indians (desirous of leaving Libya) and 29 foreign nationals on board, including 6 from Bangladesh. The vessel is expected in Malta by 0800 hrs today (LT). The evacuees will be flown back to India on a special *Jet Air* (140 pax) and *Kingfisher* (190 pax) flights.

Source: MEA, New Delhi, <http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=530217345>

24. Operation 'Safe Homecoming' – Update, New Delhi 7 March 2011

In the preceding 24 hours some 1400 of our nationals have been flown out of Libya, taking the total to over 12,000, which comprises more than two third of our initial presence in Libya.

MV Red Star One returned to Malta from Misurata (Libya) yesterday morning with all the 301 Indians (desirous of leaving Libya) and 29 foreign nationals, on board. The passengers returned to India last night, on special *Jet Air* (140 pax) and *Kingfisher* (190 pax) flights. All our nationals have thus been brought back from Malta.

MV Red Star One would now set sail for Sirte (Libya) tomorrow and reach its destination in 24 hours. It is expected to evacuate 600 persons to Malta. Presently we have 1600 of our nationals in Sirte, many of who may be heading for Tripoli by road, for being air lifted from there.

A special chartered Fly Dubai flight with the last batch of 155 persons from Dzerba (Tunisia) returned to India in the early hours of today morning. In all 1120 Indians had crossed over to Tunisia who have since returned home safely.

MV Scotia Prince is on its way back to Alexandria with 972 persons from Benghazi (Libya) on board. Its arrival has been delayed due to some engine trouble and is now expected to reach in the evening of 8th March. All passengers will be flown back to India on 3 Egypt Air and one IL 76 flights, on 9th March.

All 67 Indian nationals who had crossed over to Salloum (Egypt) reached Mumbai today morning by Gulf Air commercial flight. Including the 16 who had similarly crossed over yesterday, our Mission in Cairo has already assisted 483 persons at the border post. Naval vessels INS JALASHWA and INS MYSORE are headed for Tripoli and expected to reach on 10th March. They will carry any remaining Indian nationals still in Tripoli on that day.

Source: MEA, New Delhi, <http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=530217352>

25. Operation 'Safe Homecoming' – Update, New Delhi, 8 March 2011

As scheduled, two Air India 747 special flights brought home another batch of about 720 persons to New Delhi, in the past 24 hours. Three Air India flights would be heading for Tripoli again today to ferry back an additional 1000 passengers. As of this evening, the number of Indians remaining to be evacuated from Tripoli would drop to about 1700, including 400 expected to reach there by road today, from Sirte.

MV Red Star One which is at Sirte (Libya) is expected to return to Malta with 170 of our nationals on 10th March. They would be flown home on special flights thereafter. With this, all Indians desirous of leaving Sirte would have been moved out.

MV Scotia Prince is headed back to Alexandria with 972 persons from Benghazi (Libya) on board, and likely to drop anchor at its destination today evening. All passengers will be flown back to India on three Egypt Air and one IL 76 flights, on 9th March.

An Air India flight AI-160 (Airbus 330), on its way to New Delhi from Tripoli with 261 passengers, had to make an unscheduled landing at Malta Airport at 2236 hrs. on 6th March. MEA officials facilitated the passengers and crew suitably. Air India sent a relief aircraft from New Delhi yesterday, which brought everyone back to New Delhi, in the wee hours of the morning today.

Some 36 evacuation sorties have already been undertaken by special flights arranged by the Ministry so far. The operation would continue, till each and every one of our citizens, desirous of returning, is brought back safely.

Source: MEA, New Delhi, <http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=530217354>

26. Operation 'Safe Homecoming' – Update, New Delhi, 9 March 2011

As scheduled, some 14,000 Indians have been evacuated from Libya, including about 1000 passengers who were flown back last evening and today morning, from Tripoli, on three Air India special flights. Over the next twenty four hours, some 2400 persons will come home in 8 special flights, from Libya (Tripoli and Sebha) and Egypt (Alexandria).

Four Air India airplanes are on their way to Libya to ferry back 1000 persons from Tripoli and 400 from Sebha today, leaving behind the LAST BATCH of some 550 in Tripoli and 450 in Sebha, who will be evacuated tomorrow. It may be added that our nationals from Sirte, Misurata, Benghazi and Kufrah have already been pulled out. The Ministry is confident that by tomorrow almost all Indian nationals desirous of leaving Libya will be back home.

MV Scotia Prince arrived in Alexandria last evening with 972 passengers on board. An IAF IL-76 (Gajraj) took off from Alexandria at 1050 hrs. (local time) today for New Delhi, with the first batch of 181 of our nationals and is expected to land around 1930 hrs. Three additional special

Egypt Air flights are ferrying the remaining passengers to Mumbai, over this evening and early morning tomorrow.

Naval vessels INS JALASHWA and INS MYSORE are already in the Mediterranean, just off the Libyan coast. The two ships have adequate carrying capacity but may not be pressed into service, given the successful air-bridge put in place between Libya and India since February 26. MV *Red Star One* returned to Malta this morning, with 150 Indian and other nationals. A special Jet Airways plane is bringing them to India later tonight.

Source: MEA, New Delhi, <http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=530217363>

27. Operation 'Safe Homecoming' successfully drawing towards a close – Update, New Delhi, 10 March 2011

As *Operation Safe Homecoming* rapidly draws towards a close tonight, some 15,400 of our nationals are already home from Libya, including 2400 who have returned over last evening and this morning. They came back on 9 special flights, from Libya (Tripoli and Sebha), Egypt (Alexandria) and Malta. 47 air charter sorties have been undertaken since the commencement of the evacuation exercise on February 26.

The last 262 of our nationals in Alexandria (Egypt), who had arrived by Scotia Prince from Benghazi on March 8th, left by air for Mumbai at 0500 hrs. (LT) this morning. In all 2858 persons from Libya were transported safely through Egypt - 2161 from Benghazi (by sea to Alexandria), 527 via the Salloum land border and the remaining 170 from Djerba (Tunisia) by air through Cairo.

The Egyptian authorities have been most supportive, even allowing Indians to enter the country without visas. Egypt Air charter flights joined in the evacuation exercise.

All 158 Indian nationals along with 9 Bangladeshi nationals, who had been evacuated from Sirte to Malta, were flown to New Delhi this morning on a chartered flight of Jet Airways. In the last leg of this operation, special Air India flights are heading for Tripoli (one) and Sebha (two) to ferry back the remaining Indian professionals and workers desirous of leaving Libya. These flights are expected back late tonight and in the early hours of tomorrow morning.

Meanwhile, INS Jalashwa docked in Tripoli harbour in the forenoon today and is helping in the evacuation of any remaining Indian nationals from Tripoli seeking to return home.

Source: MEA, New Delhi, <http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=530217368>

28. UNSC resolution on Libya - India's Explanation of Vote, New York, 17 March 2011

(The explanation on Vote below, was delivered by Ambassador and DPR Manjeev Singh Puri, at UNSC in New York on 17 March 2011)

India has been following with serious concern the developments in Libya, which have led to loss of numerous lives and injuries to many more. We deplore the use of force, which is totally unacceptable, and must not be resorted to. We are very concerned with the welfare of the civilian population and foreigners in Libya.

2. The UN Secretary-General has appointed a Special Envoy, who has just visited Libya. We have not had the benefit of his report or even a report from the Secretariat on his assessment as yet. This would have given us an objective analysis of the situation on ground. The African Union is also sending a High Level Panel to Libya to make serious efforts for a peaceful end to the crisis there. We must stress the importance of political efforts, including those of the Secretary-General's Special Envoy, to address the situation.

3. The resolution that the Council has adopted today authorizes far reaching measures under Chapter VII of the UN Charter with relatively little credible information on the situation on the ground in Libya. We also do not have clarity about details of enforcement measures, including who and with what assets will participate and how these measures will be exactly carried out. It is, of course, very important that there is full respect for sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Libya.

4. Mr President, the financial measures that are proposed in the resolution could impact, directly or through indirect routes, ongoing trade and investment activities of a number of member-states thereby adversely affecting the economic interests of the Libyan people and others dependent on these trade and economic ties. Moreover, we had to ensure that the measures will mitigate and not exacerbate an already difficult situation for the people of Libya. Clarity in the resolution on any spill-over affects of these measures would have been very important.

5. Mr President, we have abstained on the resolution in view of the above. I would like to re-emphasize that India continues to be gravely concerned about the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Libya and calls on the Libyan authorities to cease fire, protect the civilian population and address the legitimate demands of the Libyan people.

*Source: Permanent Mission of India to the United Nations, New York, New York,
<http://www.un.int/india/2011/ind1838.pdf>*

29. India gravely concerned at violence in Libya, calls for peaceful resolution of differences, New Delhi, 20 March 2011

India views with grave concern the continuing violence, strife and deteriorating humanitarian situation in Libya. It regrets the air strikes that are taking place. As stated earlier by India, the measures adopted should mitigate and not exacerbate an already difficult situation for the people of Libya. It hopes that this would not lead to greater harm to innocent civilians, foreign nationals and diplomatic missions and their personnel still in Libya.

India calls upon all parties to abjure use of or the threat of use of force and to resolve their differences through peaceful means and dialogue in which the UN and regional organisations should play their roles.

Source: MEA, New Delhi, <http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=530217435>

e. Saudi Arabia

30. Visit of Secretary General of the National Security Council of Saudi Arabia, New Delhi, 29 March 2011

His Royal Highness Prince Bandar Bin Sultan Bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, Secretary General of the National Security Council of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia called on the Prime Minister of India, Dr. Manmohan Singh on March 28, 2011.

The Saudi Envoy briefed the Prime Minister on recent developments in West Asia, North Africa, and Gulf regions, and in particular the efforts being made by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the GCC countries to bring peace, stability and prosperity for the people in the region. He indicated the desire of the Gulf States to meet the genuine aspirations of the people in an atmosphere of peace and stability. HRH Prince Bandar reiterated Saudi Arabia's keen interest in further consolidating relations between India and the Kingdom in all areas of cooperation, without reservation.

The Prime Minister expressed his deep appreciation to HRH Prince Bandar for his visit, and conveyed India's firm commitment to further developing its strategic partnership with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. West Asia and the Gulf were regions of great interest to India because of the presence of almost six million Indians. The region was a major economic partner and source for energy for India. Cooperation between India and the Kingdom and the GCC States was a factor of peace and stability in the region. The Prime Minister emphasized that differences should be resolved through peaceful dialogue and discussion and countries should be free to determine their own pathways to national development. He expressed confidence that the wisdom and leadership of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques His Majesty King Abdullah will contribute to peace, stability and welfare of the people of the region.

Source: MEA, New Delhi, <http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=530217476>

E. UAE

31. Welfare Measures for Indian Workers in UAE, New Delhi, 3 March 2011

The Embassy of India in UAE has informed that they have not come across any wide spread system, in which workers are misled to UAE without job securities. UAE comprises of seven Emirates. In Abu Dhabi Emirate it is mandatory to cover every worker with a medical insurance.

However, this facility is not available to Indian workers in other six Emirates. As far as the personal accidents and life insurance is concerned, every registered Indian worker in the UAE is expected to be covered under the Workmen's Compensation Regulation. In cases of destitutes, emergency medical care is also provided under the Indian Community Welfare Fund (ICWF). Indian Workers' Resource Centre (IWRC) is also functioning at Dubai for taking care of emergency needs of Indian workers. Besides, every emigrant with Emigration Check Required (ECR) passports seeking employment overseas in the 17 ECR countries has to compulsorily obtain an insurance policy under Pravasi Bhartiya Bima Yojana (PBBY). The medical benefits in emergent situations under the PBBY are as under:-

- (i) If a worker is not received by the employer on his arrival at the destination abroad or there is any substantive change in the employment contract to his disadvantage or if the employment is prematurely terminated within the period of employment for no fault of the emigrant, the insurance company reimburses one way economy class airfare provided the grounds of repatriation are certified by the Indian Mission/post concerned.
- (ii) The insured person is paid actual one-way economy class airfare by the insurance company, if he falls sick or is declared medically unfit to commence or continue working and the service contract is terminated by the foreign employer within 12 months of taking the insurance.
- (iii) The insurance policy also provides medical cover of Rs.75,000 on grounds of accidental injuries or sickness occurring during the period of insurance during employment.
- (iv) The insurance policy provides maternity benefits, subject to minimum cover of Rs.25,000.
- (v) The family of the emigrant worker in India consisting of spouse and two dependent children up to 21 years of age are entitled to hospitalization cover for a maximum amount of Rs.25,000.

This information was given by the Minister of Overseas Indian Affairs, Shri Vayalar Ravi in a written reply in the Rajya Sabha today.

Source: PIB, New Delhi,

<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=70495>

f. Yemen

32. Indian nationals, whose presence is not essential, advised to leave Yemen, New Delhi, 11 March 2011

In view of the evolving situation in Yemen those Indian Nationals residing in Yemen, whose presence is not essential, particularly families, may consider leaving the country by the commercial means available. All non-essential travel to Yemen, meanwhile, may be avoided until the situation improves.

Source: MEA, New Delhi. <http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=530217376>

Specific Issues

g. Hajj

33. Reforms in Hajj facilities, New Delhi, 16 March 2011

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

- (a) whether the Hajj facilities reforms are under the consideration of the Government;
- (b) if so, the details thereof and the steps the Government proposes to take in the matter; and
- (c) the time by which the reforms will be in place?

Answer: The Minister of State in the Ministry of External Affairs (Mrs. Preneet Kaur)

(a) to (c) 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: Lok Sabha (House of the People), Unstarred Question no. 3433 asked by Mr. Chandrakant Khaire, <http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=220217453>

Multilateral Issues/ Regional Issues

h. India and the Middle East/ West Asia

34. Recent uprisings in Arab countries, New Delhi, 3 March 2011

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

- (a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the recent uprisings in various Arab countries like Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen and other parts of West Asia; and
- (b) If so, the details thereof and its impact on our country, both political and economic?

Answer: The Minister of State in the Ministry of External Affairs (Mr. E. Ahmed)

(a) & (b) Government are aware of the recent political developments in various Arab countries including Tunisia, Egypt and Yemen. Government are closely following the developments in these countries particularly with regard to safety and security of the Indian community. Government have also issued travel advisories to avoid non-essential travel to Libya, Yemen and Bahrain.

On developments in Egypt, Government conveyed its position and reaction on a number of occasions. When 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."* Subsequently, we have offered to extend possible support to Egypt particularly with regard to its electoral process considering India's past and rich experience in this field. India's offer has been welcomed by Egypt.

There are around 18,000 Indians in Libya. As the situation in Libya remains tense, we have started evacuation for bringing back Indians from Libya both by air and sea. Our embassies in Tripoli, Cairo [to assist Indians coming out of Libya by land/sea border to Egypt] and Tunis [to assist Indians coming out of Libya by land border to Tunisia] are working round the clock and Government is doing its best to assist in the safe return of Indian nationals at the earliest. Round-the-clock control rooms are also functioning smoothly both at Ministry of External Affairs and Embassy of India in Tripoli for providing assistance in this regard.

This region is home to nearly 5 million Indians. Besides, this region is also a vital source of our energy needs in terms of oil and gas imports for India as well as fertilizer inputs. Government continue to monitor the developments in these countries so that no adverse impact is felt on bilateral relationship as well as with regard to the safety and security of Indians residing there.

Source: Rajya Sabha (Council of States), Unstarred Question no. 822 asked by Mr. D. Raja and Mr. M. P. Achuthan, <http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=220117334>

35. IBSA Declaration on the situation in the Middle East and Northern Africa, New Delhi, 8 March 2011

The Ministers of External Relations of India, Brazil and South Africa, gathered in New Delhi, on March 8th 2011, for the VII Ministerial Meeting of the IBSA Dialogue Forum, closely attentive to the present political unrest in several Middle Eastern and northern African countries, stressed their expectation that the changes sweeping the region follow a

peaceful course. They expressed their confidence in a positive outcome in harmony with the aspirations of the peoples.

Referring to the IBSA Ministerial Declaration, issued in Brasilia, on April 15th 2010, on the occasion of the Fourth IBSA Summit, when a meeting with the Palestinian Foreign Minister Riad Malki was held, they stated their conviction that the recent developments in the Region may offer a chance for a comprehensive peace in the Middle East. This process should include the solution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through the resumption of negotiations that will lead to a two-state solution, with the creation of a sovereign, democratic, independent, united and viable Palestinian State, coexisting peacefully alongside Israel, within secure, pre-1967 borders, and with East Jerusalem as its capital.

In line with the Joint Statement of the IBSA Ministerial Meeting, held in New York, February 11th 2011, concerning countries that risk of lapsing or relapsing into conflict, they underlined the key role of development strategies for the achievement of sustainable peace. In that sense, they recalled that IBSA countries are sponsoring projects in Palestine, such as the construction of a Multipurpose Sports Center in Ramallah and the creation of a Palestinian Youth Sports League. Recalling their condition of developing countries, who share therefore the same challenges for ensuring sustainable development, they are willing to cooperate with other Arab countries in order to address social and economic issues aiming at long term stability and recovery, according to regional demands, whenever requested.

Taking into consideration the presence of the three countries in the Security Council during 2011, they stated their intention to assess areas for further cooperation and discuss the current security situation with a view to making a positive contribution.

Source: MEA, New Delhi,

<http://meaindia.nic.in/meaxpsite/declarestatement/2011/03/08js03.pdf>

36. India USA Strategic Dialogue postponed due to state elections and WANA situation, New Delhi, 11 March 2011

India and the United States were planning to hold the second India-US Strategic Dialogue, co-chaired by External Affairs Minister and the US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, in New Delhi in early part of April 2011. In view of the State elections in India and ongoing developments in West Asia and North Africa, the two sides have decided to reschedule the Strategic Dialogue and will hold it at the earliest available opportunity. The date for the Strategic Dialogue will be decided through mutual consultation...

Source: MEA, New Delhi, <http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=530217370>

37. Trade with Gulf Countries, New Delhi, 14 March 2011

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

- (a) the details of trade between India and gulf countries during the last three years;
- (b) whether trade between India and gulf countries have increased and India is hopeful of increasing country`s bilateral trade during the current years;
- (c) if so, the details thereof; and
- (d) the steps taken by the Government to promote the trade with gulf countries in the ensuing five year plan?

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

- (a) The details of trade between India and gulf countries during the last three years are as under:-

(Values in US \$ Million)

Year	Total Trade
2007-08	66,850.03
2008-09	91,630.21
2009-10	83,977.39
2010-11 (Apr-Sept)	49,671.91

(b) & (c): The total trade between India and Gulf Countries during the first six months of the current financial year i.e. 2010 – 2011 has increased to US\$ 49,671.91 from US\$ 36,083.89 for the same period of the previous year. The trade turn over during 2009-10 from the previous year has declined due to global economic recession.

(d): All out efforts are being made to increase the bilateral trade between India and Gulf countries. Apex Industry Chambers such as Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI), Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM) and Confederation of Indian Industries (CII) organize Joint Business Council Meetings and Business to Business Meetings for sensitisation of businessmen in Gulf countries. We also participate in

major trade fairs / exhibitions organized by Gulf countries to popularise Indian products. Apart from this, India is negotiating a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, which aims to boost bilateral trade, services and investment with them.

Source: Lok Sabha (House of the People), Unstarred Question no.2801 asked by Mr. Jai Prakash Agarwal and Mr. Sambasiva Rayapati Rao

38. Gas from Iran and Oman, New Delhi, 15 March 2011

Question: (a) whether there is a proposal for bringing gas from Iran and Oman by sea route; and
(b) if so, the details thereof?

Answer: Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas (Mr. S. Jaipal Reddy)

(a) & (b): A statement is laid on the table of the House.

STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PARTS (a) & (b) OF THE RAJYA SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO.263 ASKED BY SHRI PRAKASH JAVADEKAR, MP TO BE ANSWERED ON MARCH 15, 2011

(a) & (b): Gas supplies to India have been proposed from several gas rich countries of Middle East with a Hub in Oman (or its proximity) through a deep sea pipeline. GAIL (India) Ltd. has entered into a Principles of Cooperation in 2009 with South Asia Gas Enterprises (SAGE), so as to explore the technical viability of laying deep sea pipeline from Middle-East to India.

Source: Rajya Sabha (Council of States), Starred Question no. 263 asked by Mr. Prakash Keshav Javadkar

39. Security of Indians in Arab countries, New Delhi, 16 March 2011

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

(a) whether the Government has made any arrangements for the evacuation and rehabilitation of Indians stranded in Arab countries, especially in Libya;

(b) if so, the details thereof alongwith the number of Indians who have been brought back from such countries to India, country-wise;

(c) whether any plan has been formulated for the livelihood of the overseas people on their return to the country as well as the safety of their property left by them in the concerned Arabian country;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) the steps taken/proposed to be taken for the security of Indians living in such countries?

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

(a) to (e) A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PARTS (a) TO (e) OF LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO.297 REGARDING “SECURITY OF INDIANS IN ARAB COUNTRIES” FOR ANSWER ON 16.03.2011

In view of the disturbed conditions in some of the Arab countries, the safety and security of Indian nationals residing in these countries is Government's foremost priority. Taking into account the deteriorating situation in Libya, the Government took the decision to relocate Indian nationals out of Libya and assist in their return to India. In this regard, Government made comprehensive arrangements for their evacuation. Government facilitated departures of all Indian nationals desirous of leaving Libya and brought back about 16,200 Indian nationals safely to India by March 12, 2011.

Ministry of External Affairs in association with the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs took special care to facilitate the returning Indians at the Delhi and Mumbai airports.

During the political protests in Egypt, three special flights were arranged by Air India which was upon request of the Indian community. These flights carried around 670 Indians from Cairo to Mumbai. This was not evacuation and government only facilitated arrangement of the special flights of the Air India to Cairo which brought back Indians desirous of returning to India.

Despite considerable logistical challenges the Government had put in place a well coordinated “Operation Safe Homecoming” to bring home our nationals from Libya in the quickest and safest manner possible. Government continues to closely monitor the situation in other Arab countries and take necessary steps for the safety and security of Indian nationals residing in these countries. Our Mission in Tripoli will take up the matter with the Libyan authorities for the safety of the properties and assets left behind by Indian nationals.

At present there is no rehabilitation scheme in operation in the Government of India for the emigrant Indian workers returning to the country. However, the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs has proposed a scheme called Pension and Life Insurance Fund (PLIF) for the overseas Indian workers having Emigration Check Required Passport who have emigrated overseas on employment/contract visa. The scheme aims to accumulate savings for facilitating their resettlement on their return and also provide pension and life insurance coverage in their old age. The proposal is under consultation with the other Ministries before finally taking shape for the necessary approval of the Cabinet.

However, among the State Governments, the State Government of Kerala's Non-Resident Keralites' Affairs Department (NORKA) has launched various schemes in order to provide social security cover to millions of NRKs. These are Pravasi Identity Card and Karuniam, Swanthwana.

Source: Lok Sabha (House of the People), Starred Question no. 297 asked by Mr. Anto Antony and Mr. Asaduddin Owaisi, <http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=220217420>

40. PM's statement in the Lok Sabha (House of the People), New Delhi, 23 March 2011

Following is the text of PM's statement in the Lok Sabha while replying to the discussions under Rule 193 on 23rd March, 2011.

...Madam Speaker, I must confess to you that it is with the tinge of sadness that I am addressing this august House. Our country is faced with enormous challenges. The Middle East, West Asia and North Africa are in flares. We have six million citizens of our country based in these countries. We should be worrying about the future of those citizens of ours. Seventy per cent of our oil supplies come from the Middle East. If the conflict in the area gathers momentum, there will be a serious question mark about our quest for energy security. I thought that this august House would use this opportunity to reflect, not in a spirit of partisan upmanship, but as one, as people charged with the responsibility of governing this country to work out a viable strategy as to how we should and we can deal with these emerging events. Instead, we have chosen to be exercised by what some embassy official writes about us...

Source: PIB, New Delhi, <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=71285>

41. Prime Minister's speech at Dinner hosted by him in honour of the Prime Minister of Pakistan, Mohali, 30 March 2011

he Prime Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh addressed the august gathering at the Dinner hosted by him in honour of Pakistan Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani at Mohali. Following is the excerpt from the text of Prime Minister's speech delivered on the occasion:

...We live in the world of great uncertainty. What is happening in the West Asia - no body could imagine only a month or two ago. And all this makes it all the more necessary that India and Pakistan, placed as we are strategically in this region, should both together exchange views and evolve a cooperative strategy on how to deal with the highly uncertain regional and global environment we live in today. It goes without saying that if oil prices rise, if there is unrest in West Asia it would affect both of us, both our countries, enormously as I mentioned to you this afternoon. It is therefore very important that the two countries should increasingly look at all

these developments from the point of view of our peoples' needs, their aspirations and how working together we can find cooperative strategies to deal with these massive challenges that we face...

Source: PIB, New Delhi, <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=71412>

i. Combating Piracy

42. Statement by External Affairs Minister Mr. S.M. Krishna in Lok Sabha on combating piracy, New Delhi, 11 March 2011

The Cabinet Committee on Security met today and considered proposals with regard to conduct of anti-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden and off the Coast of Somalia.

The Committee approved a series of measures which will be taken by the Government of India to address the legal, administrative and operational aspects of combating piracy. A broad policy framework covering all these aspects was approved. This would involve actions that would be taken in the medium and long term by the Ministries of Shipping, External Affairs and Defence.

The Committee also specifically considered the immediate situation arising out from holding of Indian hostages by pirates. It noted that as of now 53 Indian seafarers remain in captivity on 5 different ships. The Committee expressed its sympathy with the families of the hostages, and decided that the Government would take all appropriate action to safeguard their welfare. It approved the following immediate steps:-

- Intensify diplomatic efforts through consultations with the Governments of Egypt and the UAE where the owners of concerned vessels reside, as well as with the Governments of other nationalities who are also being held as hostages and intensifying diplomatic efforts both at the multilateral level and within the framework of the United Nations.
- Stepping up of contacts with the owners of the vessels concerned.
- Establishing of Inter-ministerial Group under the chairmanship of the Cabinet Secretary. The Group will act as an apex forum at the Government of India level to monitor the early release of Indian ships or cargo or crew. The Group will also consider welfare measures necessitated after the release of hijacked Indian nationals.
- Formulation of suitable standard operating procedures for the Indian Navy and coordination of the Indian Navy's activities with the Navies of friendly foreign countries in the Gulf of Aden.

Source: MEA, New Delhi, <http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=530117373>

Note: The Exact web links for the questions in the Indian Parliament are non-functional due to technical reasons. They can be searched through the question number or the name of the Member of Parliament concerned at the Website of Rajya Sabha (www.rajyasabha.nic.in) and Lok Sabha (www.loksabha.nic.in).

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