

INDIA SPEAKS

(Monthly Digest of Official Indian Statements on Middle East)

No. 24

July 2011

Bilateral Issues

a. Iran

1. Statement by Ambassador Hardeep Singh Puri, Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations at the Un Security Council Briefing on the Iran Sanctions (1737) Committee, New York, 23 June 2011

Thank you, Mr President.

I would join other colleagues in thanking Ambassador Nester Osorio for presenting the 90-day report of the 1737 Committee. We appreciate the work of the Committee under Ambassador Osorio's stewardship. We also note the Panel of Experts' report which is under consideration of the 1737 Committee.

Mr. President, as a country abiding by its obligations under international treaties and having strong credentials of non-proliferation, India has taken a consistent stand on the Iran nuclear issue. We support the right of all States, including Iran, to peaceful use of nuclear energy. Exercise of this right should, however, be consistent with their international obligations.

We believe that the International Atomic Energy Agency has a central role in resolution of technical issues concerning Iranian nuclear programme. Iran should cooperate fully with the IAEA to restore international confidence in the exclusively peaceful nature of its nuclear

programme. We support intensification of efforts to address the Iranian nuclear issue by peaceful means, through dialogue and negotiation.

Mr. President, we call upon all sides to fully implement the resolutions this Council has adopted. All efforts should be made to ensure that legitimate trade and economic activities of Iran and other countries do not suffer while implementing the measures sanctioned by the relevant resolutions.

Earlier this month, the mandate of the Panel of Experts was extended for another year. We support the Panel's work to assist the 1737 Committee in a fair and transparent manner. Like any other Panel, we expect that the work of the Panel will be in accordance with its mandate. On our part, we will continue to engage with other members of the Committee to enable its work effectively and efficiently.

Thank you.

Source: Permanent Mission of India to the United Nations, New York,
<http://www.un.int/india/2011/ind1876.pdf>

b. Kuwait

2. Satish C. Mehta appointed as the next Ambassador of India to Kuwait, New Delhi, 23 June 2011

Mr. Satish C. Mehta, Joint Secretary at headquarters has been appointed as the next Ambassador of India to Kuwait. He is expected to take up his assignment shortly.

Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi,
<http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=530217770>

c. Oman

3. J.S. Mukul appointed as the next Ambassador of India to Sultanate of Oman, New Delhi 6 June 2011

Mr. J.S. Mukul, Joint Secretary at headquarters, has been appointed as the next Ambassador of India to Sultanate of Oman in succession to Mr. Anil Wadhwa. He is expected to take up his assignment shortly.

Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi,
<http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=530217709>

d. Sudan

4. Statement by Ambassador Hardeep Singh Puri, Permanent Representative at the UN Security Council briefing on Sudan , New York, 20 June 2011

Thank you, Mr President.

At the outset, I would like to thank President Thabo Mbeki and SRSG Haile Menkerios for their briefings on the situation in Abyei and other areas in the Sudan. I also want to thank the PR of the Sudan and Representative of the Government of South Sudan, Mr. Ezekiel Lol Gatkuoth, for their statements.

Mr President, over the past month, we witnessed serious deterioration in the security and humanitarian situations in Abyei, Southern Kordofan and adjoining areas. More than one hundred thousand persons are reported to have been displaced. The UNMIS peacekeepers have been obstructed in implementation of their mandate and access of the humanitarian agencies is also restricted. These developments not only underline the fragile security situation but also lack of trust between the CPA parties. As the post-referendum transition period nears its end, the ongoing conflicts can have disastrous consequences for the people inhabiting the region as the parties will divert scarce resources from the urgently needed nation-building tasks.

It is, therefore, necessary to expeditiously resolve the stalemate. We commend the efforts of the African Union's High-level Implementation Panel, led by President Thabo Mbeki, and SRSG Haile Menkerios to facilitate dialogue between the parties and offer a package of agreements on outstanding CPA issues, including security arrangements for Abyei and border, sharing of oil wealth, etc. The negotiations that began last week have led to signing of an agreement on Abyei today. We support the continuing efforts by President Mbeki and SRSG Menkerios to mediate between the parties to resolve other issues and urge the parties to show a spirit of compromise, flexibility and political will to reach a comprehensive agreement other outstanding issues. We also appreciate the role played by Prime Minister Zenawi of Ethiopia for security arrangements for Abyei.

Mr. President, a number of pending problems between the North and the South Sudan have long and complicated historical backgrounds. Their resolution requires patience and an approach that takes into consideration long-term interests of all the peoples inhabiting the region. Any attempt to put artificial deadlines and preconceived ideas will not be helpful to enhance mutual trust between the parties, nor for the long-term resolution of the pending issues.

We urge all the parties concerned with and interested in the issues between the North and the South to encourage the parties to abjure violence and rededicate themselves to the same spirit in which they have implemented the CPA over the last six years. Unilateral actions, particularly military operations, will not be in the interest of either party. The parties should act

with utmost restraint and refrain from provocative actions and ensure freedom of movement and access to UNMIS. They should work towards long-term cooperative relationship that will benefit both the North and the South and help them undertake urgently needed development activities. The International community, including the Security Council, should stand ready to support the parties in implementation of the agreements that they may reach. We hope that the agreement on Abyei's security will be expeditiously endorsed by a resolution of this Council. To this end, we stand ready to work with the other members of the Council.

Thank you.

Source: Permanent Mission of India to the United Nations, New York,
<http://www.un.int/india/2011/ind1867.pdf>

e. UAE

5. Foreign Minister of UAE to pay official visit to New Delhi, New Delhi, 25 June 2011

Minister for Foreign Affairs of United Arab Emirates (UAE) H.H. Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan will pay an official visit to New Delhi from 26 to 27 June 2011. He will hold talks with the External Affairs Minister and is likely to call on the Vice President, as well as, the Prime Minister.

India enjoys close and multifaceted relations with UAE which is one of India's largest trade partners. During 2009-10 bilateral trade touched US\$ 43 billion. Indians comprise the largest single expatriate community in the country.

Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi,
<http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=530217780>

6. Official visit of Foreign Minister of UAE to India, New Delhi, 28 June 2011

H.H. Sheikh Abdullah Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Foreign Minister of the United Arab Emirates, paid an official visit to India on 26-27 June 2011. He was accompanied by senior officials and a business delegation comprising CEOs of UAE companies having large investments in India.

On 27th June FM Al Nahyan called on Vice President Shri Mohammed Hamid Ansari and Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh. He also held official delegation level talks with EAM Shri S. M. Krishna. Both sides reviewed the current state of bilateral relations and discussed recent developments in regional and international issues. FM Al Nahyan reiterated UAE's full support for India's candidature for a permanent seat in the UN Security Council.

Both leaders signed a bilateral MOU on periodic Political Consultations between the two Foreign Offices on bilateral issues, as well as, exchange of views on regional and international issues of mutual interest.

India and UAE have extensive political, economic and cultural ties that are growing rapidly. During 2009-10, India was UAE's largest trading partner with bilateral trade of US\$ 43 billion.

FM Sheikh Al Nahyan welcomed greater Indian investments in UAE, as well as, the other way around. Both sides agreed to work together to significantly enhance the profile of India-UAE investment relations, particularly in the infrastructure sector. It was also agreed that the Joint Commission on Economic Cooperation Meeting will be held in Abu Dhabi later this year.

Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi,
<http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=530217788>

7. Agreement signed during the visit of UAE Foreign Minister, New Delhi, and 27 June 2011

Name of Agreement/MoU	UAE Signatory	Indian Signatory
MoU between the two countries on Political Consultations	Sheikh Abdullah Bin Zayed Al-Nahyan Minister of Foreign Affairs	Mr. S.M. Krishna Minister of External Affairs

Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi,
<http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=530517786>

f. Yemen

8. Indian nationals in Yemen needing assistance may call on Embassy Help lines, New Delhi, 4 June 2011

The Embassy of India in Sana'a has already set up Help Lines for Indian nationals, details of which are as under:

- Land line + 967 1425 308
- Cell +967 734 000 657

Indian nationals requiring assistance of any kind, especially in travelling out of Yemen, may wish to contact the Embassy of India using the help lines.

Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi,
<http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=530217704>

9. Help lines in MEA and Sana'a on Yemen situation, New Delhi, 5 June 2011

Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) has already advised Indian nationals in Yemen to exit the country through available commercial means.

Over 10,000 PIOs and Indian nationals are still estimated to be in Yemen.

Keeping in view the evolving situation and to provide information / assistance to Indian nationals or their family members, MEA and the Embassy of India in Sana'a, have set up HELP LINES, details of which are as under:

Ministry of External Affairs – *(Timing 1000 to 1800 hrs daily)*

- Tel: +91 11 2301 5300 and +91 11 2301 2113
- Fax: +91 11 2301 8158
- Email: controlroom@mea.gov.in

The Embassy of India, Sana'a has set up revised HELP LINES for Indian nationals, details of which are as under:

Telephones:

- + 967 1433 629 (During office hours only)
- + 967 1425 308 (AFTER office hours only)
- + 967 711 880 938 (Round the clock – LOCAL calls only)
- +967 734 000 657 (Round the clock – ALL calls)

Fax: + 967 1433 630

Email: helpline@eosisanaa.com

Indian nationals requiring assistance of any kind, especially in travelling out of Yemen, may wish to contact the Embassy of India using the help lines.

Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi,
<http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=530217703>

10. Revised Help lines numbers of Embassy of India Sana'a (Yemen), New Delhi, 5 June 2011

The Embassy of India, Sana'a has set up revised HELP LINES for Indian nationals, details of which are as under:

Telephones:

- + 967 1433 629 (During office hours only)
- + 967 1425 308 (AFTER office hours only)
- + 967 711 880 938 (Round the clock – LOCAL calls only)
- +967 734 000 657 (Round the clock – ALL calls)

Fax: + 967 1433 630

Email: helpline@eoisanaa.com

Indian nationals requiring assistance of any kind, especially in travelling out of Yemen, may wish to contact the Embassy of India using the help lines.

Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi,
<http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=530217707>

11. Indian national advised again to leave Yemen – Indian Embassy in Sana'a to review arrangements after 11th June 2011, New Delhi 7 June 2011

Ministry has advised Indian nationals in Yemen to leave the country by available commercial means. Advisories on 27 May and 5 June 2011, available on MEA website refer. Representatives of Indian Associations in Yemen have also been sensitized about the matter.

Already help lines have been set up by MEA and our Mission in Sana'a to provide assistance, including with travel, to those Indians who may require it. Embassy officials at Sana'a have been extending necessary facilitation to departing Indians. However, not even a dozen of our nationals have availed of Mission's help in the past few days and actually left Yemen.

All Indian nationals are once again advised to leave Yemen, given the prevailing security situation. They should urgently approach the Indian Mission in Sana'a on the help lines, given below, for any assistance that may be needed.

Telephones:

- + 967 1433 629 (During office hours only)
- + 967 1425 308 (AFTER office hours only)
- + 967 711 880 938 (Round the clock – LOCAL calls only)
- +967 734 000 657 (Round the clock – ALL calls)

Fax: + 967 1433 630

Email: helpline@eoisanaa.com

These arrangements will be in effect till Saturday 11 June 2011, whereupon the same will be reviewed.

*Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi,
<http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=530217718>*

12. Travel assistance to Indian nationals needing help in Yemen, New Delhi, 10 June 2011

In response to questions on a report in a national daily today, the Official Spokesperson said, “The report that Indians were stranded in Yemen for want of funds or travel documents does not portray a correct picture.

Ministry of External Affairs and the Indian Embassy in Sana’a have, repeatedly reached out to Indian nationals, as well as, representatives of Indian organizations in Yemen, advising them to leave the country at the earliest, by available commercial means. It has also been pointed out, time and again, that any Indian national requiring assistance including with travel, should immediately approach the Embassy in Sana’a on designated Help Lines.

This advice has been reiterated on more than one occasion. So far only a few Indian nationals have availed of the Embassy’s facilitation.

It may be reiterated that the Indian Embassy in Sana’a is all geared up to assist all Indians in need, with air tickets and/or special travel documents. While several Embassies in Yemen have closed down and most others have pruned their staff to bare minimum, the Indian Embassy in

Sana'a has been provided with additional personnel to assist our nationals. Commercial flights are operating regularly between Sana'a and Dubai, arrangements have been made by our Embassy to fly out all needy Indian nationals who approach the Mission.”

Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi,
<http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=530317733>

13. Indians Wishing to Leave Yemen advised to Register with Indian Embassy in Sana'a by 18th June, New Delhi, 16 June 2011

Indian nationals who wish to seek help in exiting from Yemen are advised to get themselves registered with Indian Embassy, Sana'a latest by 18th June, 2011 (Saturday). Arrangements for their journey to India shall be made by the Govt. of India through the Indian Embassy at Sana'a. Ministry of External Affairs and the Embassy of India, Sana'a have also set up control rooms as under:-

Ministry of External Affairs

(Timing 1000 to 1800 hrs daily)

Email: controlroom@mea.gov.in

Tel: +91 11 2301 5300 & +91 11 2301 2113

Fax: +91 11 2301 8158

Embassy of India, Sana'a, Yemen

Land line + 967 1425 308

Cell +967 734 000 657

Source: Press Information Bureau, New Delhi,
<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=72732>

14. Assistance to Indian nationals in Yemen, New Delhi, 17 June 2011

In response to questions, the Official Spokesperson said:

“In the last few days, only a handful of Indian nationals have sought assistance, from the Embassy of India, Sana'a, for travelling back to India. Yesterday, the Control Room set up by the Ministry of External Affairs at New Delhi, did not receive a single call for information or help.

As such, it has been decided to wind down the Control Room in the Ministry and the help lines being operated by our Embassy in Yemen, with effect from 1800 hrs on Saturday, 18th June, 2011. The Mission would, however, continue to render normal consular services as usual.

The Ministry and the Mission would also continue to monitor the evolving situation in Yemen closely and take whatever steps that are necessary as per exigencies.”

*Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi,
<http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=530317753>*

Specific Issues

g. Hajj

15. External Affairs Minister Mr. S. M. Krishna's Inaugural Address at Hajj Conference, New Delhi, 13 June 2011

Mrs. Mohsina Kidwai, Member of Parliament and Chairperson of Hajj Committee of India,

Senior leaders and Hon'ble Members of Parliament,

Mr. Sanjay Singh, Secretary, Ministry of External Affairs,

Honourable Members of Hajj Committee of India,

Dr. Shaik Shakir Hussain, CEO, Hajj Committee of India,

Honourable Chairpersons and Members of the State Hajj Committees,

Distinguished Religious Scholars, Members of Media

Ladies and Gentlemen!

I consider it a singular privilege to be participating in the Annual Conference for Hajj 2011. The Conference is an important occasion which provides an opportunity for stakeholders from all over the country to make a positive contribution to the preparations for the Hajj pilgrimage, keeping the interests of our Hajjis in mind.

I extend a very warm welcome to each one of you and hope that the deliberations of the Conference would be constructive and result in practical suggestions for improving the management of the Hajj.

At the outset, I would like to express the Government's firm commitment to extend all possible assistance for successful Hajj this year too, as has been done in previous years. The pilgrimage to the Holy places of Mecca and Medina is both a cherished and life-long dream, and a sacred duty

for millions of our brothers and sisters in India. We shall leave no stone unturned for making the fulfilment of their dream and duty as comfortable as we can.

You would be aware that a record number of [171,671] pilgrims from our country performed Hajj last year. The success of the operations was despite late start due to several court cases challenging various aspects of Hajj policy and practice. This success could not have been possible without collective efforts of all stakeholders. I congratulate everyone concerned.

When I visited Saudi Arabia in March this year, I conveyed to the Saudi Government our Government's gratitude for the support extended to the Hajj Mission of India, and congratulated them on successful organization of Hajj 2010. The Saudi Embassy in New Delhi and the Consulate in Mumbai deserve our sincere thanks for the support extended to us, including through the timely issue of Hajj visas. I would like to thank specially His Excellency Mr. Faisal Hassan Trad, the Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, for all his cooperation.

Given the fact that there has been a significant increase in the number of intending Hajj pilgrims from India, the Government has requested the Saudi Government for an enhanced additional Hajj quota. During my visit to Jeddah for the conclusion of the Bilateral Hajj Agreement with the Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on March 26, 2011, I personally handed over the request for additional seats to the Saudi Minister for Hajj.

Active preparations are underway for Hajj 2011 and Review Meeting for Hajj 2010 has been held in February 2011 in Jeddah.

Last year, a decision was taken to allow those Hajj pilgrims who have applied unsuccessfully of three consecutive years to be automatically given a seat without having to participate in the draw of lots or Qurrah. This has already been implemented. Further, as part of our efforts to continuously improve Hajj management, it has been decided to allocate confirmed seats to all the intending pilgrims over 70 years of age along with a companion, with effect from this year.

Among the many measures and reforms in the Hajj process undertaken in the recent past are elections of zonal representatives, held last year. As members of the Hajj Committee of India, these representatives make a valuable contribution. Other measures include increasing the number of embarkation points from 19 to 21; setting up an inter-Ministerial committee on charter flights for Hajj pilgrims in order to provide better facilities; and opening a Helpline by our Consulate General in Jeddah for our pilgrims in Saudi Arabia.

We are constantly monitoring the flow of passport applications and issuance of passports to Hajj applicants with a view to ensuring that they get their passports in time to complete all other formalities. I am pleased to inform you that the Government has decided to give all the pilgrims selected by the Hajj Committee of India passports with validity of eight months without police

verification. Regional Passport offices have been advised to hold special passport adulates for the purpose.

I understand that the Hajj Committee of India is making efforts to introduce standardized baggage system Hajj. I have also been informed that the Hajj Committee of India is taking all necessary steps to hire accommodation for the pilgrims well in time. Over [125,000] units have already been approved for hiring. Process is on for signing of agreement with the landlords.

I am happy to note that an important component of the Hajj preparations, viz. training, is to be undertaken in several cities of India soon after this Conference. There is indeed need for proper orientation and training of pilgrims through the Hajj Committee as well as the PTOs.

Ladies and Gentlemen!

In an exercise as gigantic as Hajj, which involves many agencies outside our Ministry, outside the Government of India, and outside of our country, there would always be room for improvement.

Many of you would recall that three months ago, on March 7, a meeting of Members of Parliament belonging to the Muslim community was organized by us to elicit suggestions for improvements in management of Hajj. Valuable suggestions received from Hon'ble colleagues meeting will go a long way in further improving facilities for Hajjis and overall Hajj management.

Before I conclude, I would like to assure all the distinguished participants that my Ministry is committed to solemnly carry out its constitutional responsibility for "Pilgrimages to places outside India", in consultation and coordination with other stakeholders.

I wish you all success in your deliberations. Thank you.

Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi,
<http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=530117737>

16. Special Passport Adalat for Hajj pilgrims at RPO Delhi on 15 June 2011, New Delhi, 14 June 2011

As part of special facilities for Hajj Pilgrims, a Special Passport Adalat is being held at the Regional Passport Office, Bhikaji Cama Place, New Delhi on 15 June 2011.

Applicants, who have been selected for Hajj Pilgrimage and do not have passports, may approach the Regional Passport Office along with selection and request letters issued by the Hajj Committee.

Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi,

<http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=530217742>

Multilateral Issues/ Regional Issues

h. India and the Middle East/ West Asia

17. Prime Minister Mr. Manmohan Singh's interaction with newspaper editors, 29 June 2011

...What is happening in the Middle East is of direct concern to us. Apart from the fact that we have 6 million Indians working in the Middle East nearly 70 % of our oil supplies come from the countries of the Gulf and North Africa. What turn these events will take nobody knows...

Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi,

<http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=530317792>

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