

# **INDIA SPEAKS**

**(Monthly Digest of Official Indian Statements on Middle East)**

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**No. 26**

**September 2011**

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## **Bilateral Issues**

### **a. Egypt**

#### **1. Indian casualties due to recent turmoil in Egypt, New Delhi, 4 August 2011**

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

- (a) the number of casualties of Indian citizens in internal strife in Egypt during recent past.
- (b) whether there has been any loss to the property of Government of India and Indian's property also;  
and
- (c) the number of Indian citizens brought back to India during this period and the number of Indians living in Egypt at present?

**Answer:** the Minister of State in the Ministry of External Affairs (E. Ahamed)

- (a) As per available information, no Indian citizen was killed or seriously injured during the recent turmoil in Egypt.
- (b) There has been no loss or damage to the property belonging to the Government of India during the turmoil. However, there was one incident related to an Indian company in Alexandria in which some miscreants took away office equipment. The company has since resumed normal activity.
- (c) During the turmoil, Air India arranged three special flights, on 'no profit' basis, from Cairo to Delhi for Indian citizens living in Egypt and stranded Indian tourists who wanted to leave Egypt,

but were unable to find booking in available commercial flights. Around 670 Indians availed of these special Air India flights to return to India.

Prior to the turmoil, about 3600 Indians were estimated to be living in Egypt. By now, most of the Indians who had temporarily left Egypt during the turmoil have returned to Egypt. The estimate for the number of Indians currently living in Egypt would, therefore, be 3600.

*Source: Rajya Sabha (Council of States), Unstarred Question no. 523 Asked by Om Prakash Mathur, <http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=220117954>*

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## **b. Iran**

### **2. Threats from Iran to Stop Oil Supply, New Delhi, 2 August 2011**

**Question:**

- (a) whether it is a fact that Iran has threatened to stop crude supplies to India;
- (b) if so, the details thereof; and
- (c) what are the steps Government is taking for smooth supply of crude?

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

(a) to (c) The National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) has conveyed that it would be difficult for it to continue supply of crude oil to India's refineries, if the issue of payments to NIOC is not resolved. The Government is pursuing various options/mechanisms for effecting payments to NIOC.

The Government is closely monitoring the situation. In order to ensure smooth supply of crude oil to the country's refineries, steps being considered include contracting additional quantities from other term suppliers and / or through the spot markets, depending upon the situation.

*Source: Rajya Sabha (Council of States), Unstarred Question No.246 asked by Tariq Anwar, <http://164.100.47.5/qsearch/QRresult.aspx>*

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### **3. Iran's Threat on Oil Export, New Delhi, 11 August 2011**

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

- (a) whether Iran has threatened to cut off oil exports to India with effect from August, 2011 unless we clear payment of arrears; and
- (b) the outcome of the recent talks Government has had with Tehran to resolve the issue?

**Answer:** the Minister of State in the Ministry of External Affairs (E. Ahamed)

(a) & (b) Government has been in regular contact with the Government of Iran on the issue of settlement of payments on account of bilateral trade between the two countries. A delegation from the Islamic Republic of Iran visited India on May 30-31, 2011, to discuss this issue.

The two sides held detailed and constructive discussions on the various options for resolving the issues relating to settlement of payments. They agreed to continue their engagement in the matter. Government is making all efforts to resolve the matter expeditiously.

*Source: Rajya Sabha (Council of States), Unstarred Question no. 1304 Asked by H.K. Dua, <http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=220118037>*

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#### **4. Import of Oil from Iran, New Delhi, 23 August 2011**

**Question:**

- (a) whether India continues to import crude oil from Iran;
- (b) if so, the quantum of import per day and at what price; and
- (c) how the payment is being made?

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

(a) Yes Sir.

(b) India's oil refineries import crude oil from the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) on term contract basis. Public Sector Undertaking (PSU) refineries have a term contract of 13.10 MMTPA (263,076 barrels/day) of crude oil for 2011-12. The price of the crude oil imported/purchased from Iran is the official selling price declared on monthly basis by NIOC.

(c) After the Asian Clearing Union was withdrawn by the RBI in December 2010, the government has operationalized a new payment mechanism under which payments are being made to NIOC.

*Source: Rajya Sabha (Council of States), Unstarred Question No.2290 asked by D. Raja, <http://164.100.47.5/qsearch/QResult.aspx>*

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## c. Iraq

### 5. Indian nationals desirous of returning from Iraq, New Delhi, 10 August 2011

In response to a question, the Official Spokesperson said:

“It is understood that in recent months, a few Punjab-based travel agents encouraged some Indian nationals to go to Iraq, supposedly for working in the army camps there. However, they were instead employed with a construction company in Najaf, and subjected to long working hours with poor salaries.

Some twenty eight of the said Indian nationals have contacted the Indian Embassy in Baghdad requesting help in returning to India. The Embassy has since been proactively liaising with the local and the national authorities in Iraq, to facilitate the same. The Ministry is also in touch with the Government of Punjab and the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs in the matter.”

*Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi,*  
<http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=530317971>

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### 6. Advisory for Indians going to Iraq for work, New Delhi, 11 August 2011

It has come to the Ministry’s attention that in recent months, some Indian nationals have been lured to work in Iraq by unscrupulous Indian and Iraqi recruiting agents. On reaching there, they have often discovered that they were misled and are keen to return home.

While the Ministry of External Affairs and the Embassy of India in Baghdad are doing everything possible to assist the Indian nationals in question, all prospective workers are strongly advised to be very careful while accepting any such job offers. It is important that due diligence is exercised and antecedents of the recruiting agents and the credentials of the employers are checked carefully through concerned governmental bodies before accepting offers of such nature.

*Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi,*  
<http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=530217977>

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## d. Israel

### 7. Entry of Israeli Companies in Indian Solar Power Sector, New Delhi, 1 August 2011

Question:

(a) whether a number of Israeli companies are keen to partner with Indian firms for solar power plants in the country as they are looking huge opportunities under the Jawaharlal Nehru National Solar Mission for developing 1,200 MW of solar power by 2013;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether it is an opportunity for Indian companies to access sophisticated solar power technology developed by Israeli companies as these companies have developed high-quality techniques for harnessing solar energy; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

**Answer:** The Minister of New and Renewable Energy (Dr. Farooq Abdullah)

(a)& (b): No Indian company with Israeli partner has so far participated in Solar Power Projects under Jawaharlal Nehru National Solar Mission.

(c)&(d): Under Jawaharlal Nehru National Solar Mission, the solar power plants are to be set up on build, own and operate basis by the project developers, who are free to access suitable technology – indigenous or imported, including from Israeli companies.

*Source: Rajya Sabha (Council of States), Unstarred Question No.109 asked by A. Elavarasan, <http://164.100.47.5/qsearch/QResult.aspx>*

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## e. Libya

### 8. Indian Nurses in Libya, New Delhi, 3 August 2011

**Question:** Will the Minister of Overseas Indians Affairs be pleased to state:-

(a) whether it is a fact that a large number of nurses working in Libya lost their earnings and belongings as they left that country abruptly because of the unrest there; and

(b) the steps taken to help them in getting employment and to relocate their children in various schools to enable them to continue their studies?

**Answer:** Minister of Overseas Indian Affairs (Vayalar Ravi)

(a): Yes, Sir. As a consequence of the unrest and uprising in Libya 17,927 Indians including nurses were evacuated by the Government.

(b): The Government has constituted an Inter-Ministerial Committee of Secretaries under the Chairmanship of Cabinet Secretary to examine issues relating to repatriation, relief and rehabilitation of Indian nationals affected by the recent developments in West Asia / Gulf / North

Africa regions. State Governments concerned were also requested to assist them and provide relief where necessary.

*Source: Lok Sabha (House of the People), Unstarred Question no. 490 asked by Muhammed Hamdulla A. B. Sayeed,*

<http://164.100.47.132/LssNew/psearch/QResult15.aspx?qref=106413>

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### **9. Passport for Libya Returnees, New Delhi, 3 August 2011**

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

- (a) the number of applications received for issue of new passports from persons returned from Libya who lost passports there, State-wise;
- (b) the number of such applicants who have been issued new passports; and
- (c) the steps taken by the Government to avoid delay in issuing new passports to the Libya returnees?

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

- (a) & (b) The State-wise information on the number of applications received for issue of new passports from persons returned from Libya is at ANNEXURE. Information received so far is incomplete and on receipt of full details the same would be furnished.
- (c) The Ministry had issued instructions to all Passport Offices on 04.05.2011 for expeditious processing of the applications of Libyan returnees with the provision that no evacuation charges would be recovered.

*Source: Lok Sabha (House of the People), Unstarred Question no. 687 asked by Anto Antony,*  
<http://164.100.47.132/LssNew/psearch/QResult15.aspx?qref=105432>

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### **10. Situation in Libya should be normalized peacefully by its people, New Delhi, 23 August 2011**

We are closely monitoring the developments in Libya. There are indications that the situation in Libya is changing and the recent events in Tripoli indicate that the Transitional National Council is acquiring effective control. The situation in the country should be normalized by the people of Libya themselves in a peaceful manner adhering to democratic norms and with respect for aspirations of the people. This process should be guided by respect for the sovereignty, integrity and unity of Libya. India stands ready to extend all possible assistance for reconstruction and rehabilitation to the friendly people of Libya and wishes them peace, stability and prosperity.

*Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, New Delhi,  
<http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=530218094>*

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### **11. IOM arranging two ships to evacuate foreigners from Libya, New Delhi, 26 August 2011**

In response to a question, on a news item today in a leading national daily, the Official Spokesperson clarified,

“It is understood that an Indian national, Mr. Imtiaz Alam, who was working at the residence of a Libyan dignitary in Tripoli, succumbed to his injuries, consequent to a bombing attack last week. Efforts are underway to get his mortal remains back to India. His family in Lucknow has been intimated by his Indian colleague.

The International Organization of Migration (IOM) is making arrangements to evacuate stranded foreign nationals in Libya, by two ships leaving the country on Friday 26 and Saturday 27 August, 2011 respectively. Indian nationals still in Libya have been informed about the initiative. Those who have expressed a desire to return are being assisted, to the extent possible, despite the very difficult ground situation and extremely limited resources with our Mission at Tripoli.”

*Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, New Delhi,  
<http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=530318112>*

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## **f. Palestinian National Authority**

### **12. Visit of Special Envoy of President of the Palestinian National Authority, New Delhi, 24 August 2011**

Dr. Nabeel Shaath, former Foreign Minister of Palestine, is on a visit to India from 23-25 August 2011 as Special Envoy of the Palestine National Authority President H.E. Mr. Mahmoud Abbas.

Dr. Nabeel Shaath called on External Affairs Minister Mr. S.M. Krishna and also met Minister of State for External Affairs Mr. E. Ahamed. He handed over messages from PNA President addressed to Hon’ble President and Hon’ble Prime Minister. He sought India’s support for the Palestinian cause especially during the forthcoming UN session. Recalling his frequent visits to India when he was Palestine’s Foreign Minister, the Special Envoy was very appreciative of India’s traditional and long standing support to the Palestinian cause. He also expressed deep appreciation for India’s continued support to the Palestinians. India was the first non-Arab state

to recognize the state of Palestine in 1988, pursuant to Algiers declaration for a Palestinian State in 1988.

EAM reiterated India's strong and unwavering support to the Palestinian cause and assured that India shall continue to adhere to its principled stand on Palestine.

*Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, New Delhi,*  
<http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=530218098>

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## **g. Saudi Arabia**

### **13. Hamid Ali Rao appointed as the next Ambassador of India to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, New Delhi, 4 August 2011**

Mr. Hamid Ali Rao, presently Ambassador and permanent Representative of India to the UN Conference on Disarmament, Geneva has been appointed as the next Ambassador of India to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in succession to Mr. Talmiz Ahmad. He is expected to take up his assignment shortly.

*Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi,*  
<http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=530217910>

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## **h. Syria**

### **14. Syrian vice-Foreign Minister visiting India, New Delhi, 1 August 2011**

The Syrian Vice Foreign Minister (VFM), Dr. Faisal Mekdad, is on an official visit to India from July 31 to August 2, 2011. Today he called on the External Affairs Minister (EAM) and also met the Minister of State for External Affairs, Mr. E. Ahamed (MOS).

VFM briefed EAM about the prevailing situation in Syria, causes for violence in his country, reforms proposed by Syrian President Bashar Al Assad, details of national dialogue between the Syrian government and the opposition groups, as well as, other issues related to public protests in Syria.

EAM expressed concern on the recent escalation of violence. He urged the Government of Syria to exercise restraint, abjure violence and expedite the implementation of political reforms taking into account the aspirations of the people of Syria. MOS also reiterated the same during his meeting with VFM.

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

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<http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=530217893>

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### **15. Statement by the President of the Security Council, New York, 3 August 2011**

At the 6598th meeting of the Security Council, held on 3 August 2011, in connection with the Council's consideration of the item entitled "The situation in the Middle East", the President of the Security Council made the following statement on behalf of the Council:

The Security Council expresses its grave concern at the deteriorating situation in Syria, and expresses profound regret at the death of many hundreds of people. "The Security Council condemns the widespread violations of human rights and the use of force against civilians by the Syrian authorities.

The Security Council calls for an immediate end to all violence and urges all sides to act with utmost restraint, and to refrain from reprisals, including attacks against state institutions.

"The Security Council calls on the Syrian authorities to fully respect human rights and to comply with their obligations under applicable international law. Those responsible for the violence should be held accountable.

The Security Council notes the announced commitments by the Syrian authorities to reform, and regrets the lack of progress in implementation, and calls upon the Syrian Government to implement its commitments.

The Security Council reaffirms its strong commitment to the sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity of Syria. It stresses that the only solution to the current crisis in Syria is through an inclusive and Syrian-led political process, with the aim of effectively addressing the legitimate aspirations and concerns of the population which will allow the full exercise of fundamental freedoms for its entire population, including that of expression and peaceful assembly.

The Security Council calls on the Syrian authorities to alleviate the humanitarian situation in crisis areas by ceasing the use of force against affected towns, to allow expeditious and unhindered access for international humanitarian agencies and workers, and cooperate fully with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

The Security Council requests the Secretary-General to update the Security Council on the situation in Syria within 7 days.

*Source: United Nations Security Council, New York,*

<http://daccess->

[ods.un.org/access.nsf/Get?Open&DS=S/PRST/2011/16&Lang=E&Area=UNDOC](http://daccess-ods.un.org/access.nsf/Get?Open&DS=S/PRST/2011/16&Lang=E&Area=UNDOC)

## **Note: India held the Presidency of Security Council for the Month of August 2011**

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### **16. IBSA Delegation Visit to Syria, Damascus, 10 August 2011**

An IBSA delegation comprising of Mr. Ebrahim Ebrahim, Deputy Minister of International Relations and Cooperation of South Africa, Mr. Paulo Cordeiro de Andrade Pinto, Under Secretary General for Africa and the Middle East of the Ministry of External Relations of Brazil and Mr. Dilip Sinha, Additional Secretary for International Organizations, Ministry of External Affairs of India, called on H.E. Mr. Bashar Al-Assad, President of Syrian Arab Republic and H.E. Mr. Walid Al-Moualem, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of Syrian Arab Republic on 10th August 2011, to discuss the current situation in Syria and the way forward.

The President reassured the delegation of his commitment to the reform process, aimed at ushering in multi-party democracy, including through revision of the constitution. He said that political reforms were being finalized in consultation with the people of Syria and the national dialogue would continue to give shape to the new laws and to arrive at a suitable model for the economy. The process of revision of the constitution would be completed by February/March 2012. He acknowledged that some mistakes had been made by the security forces in the initial stages of the unrest and that efforts were underway to prevent their recurrence.

Foreign Minister Mr. Moualem briefed the delegation about the prevailing situation in Syria, the reasons behind the unrest and violence and explained the steps taken by the Government to bring the situation under control. He said that there are 3 categories of opposition in Syria: the economically disadvantaged sections; intellectuals and academics; and armed groups. He outlined in detail the political reforms that are in the process of being implemented and said that free and fair elections to the Parliament will be held in Syria before end 2011. He recalled the statement of the President of Syria to rewrite the Constitution of Syria, if considered necessary.

In recalling the adoption of UNSC Presidential Statement of 3 August, the visiting delegation reaffirmed the commitment of India, Brazil and South Africa to the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Syria. They expressed grave concern at the current situation in Syria and condemned violence from all sides. They regretted all loss of life and were concerned over the humanitarian impact of the violence. They called for an immediate end to all violence and urged all sides to act with utmost restraint and respect for human rights and international human rights law. In noting the establishment of an independent judicial committee to investigate the violence, the visiting delegation stressed the importance of ensuring the credibility and impartiality thereof, to which Mr. Moualem responded that once the report of the committee becomes available, those responsible for the violence would be held to account.

They urged the Government to positively consider the resolution adopted by the UN Human Rights Council on 29 April 2011. They stressed that it is essential for the Syrian Government not to lose momentum and to continue the process of national dialogue and political reforms with the aim of effectively addressing the legitimate aspirations and concerns of the population. This will contribute to the full exercise of fundamental freedoms by the Syrian people, including that of expression and peaceful assembly. They expressed the hope that opposition groups will cooperate in this process.

Mr. Moualem reiterated that Syria will be a free, pluralistic and multi-party democracy before the end of the year.

*Source: Embassy of India, Damascus,*  
<http://www.indianembassy-syria.com/english/whats-new/327.html>

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### **17. India's Explanation of Vote in the Human Rights Council on the Resolution on Syria, Geneva, 23 August 2011**

Madame Chairperson,

India's traditional position on country specific resolutions is well known. We do not regard spotlighting and finger -pointing at a country for human right violations as helpful. We believe that engaging the country concerned in collaborative and constructive dialogue and partnership is a more pragmatic and productive way forward. This is what India along with its partners in IBSA, Brazil and South Africa has done.

However, since some members of this Council have found it necessary to propose a country specific resolution, it would have been desirable had this been done by consensus, without resorting to a vote, to reflect the shared perspective and unanimous views of the council. This has regrettably not happened.

We hope that our position on the vote is not misconstrued as condoning violations of human rights in any country, including Syria.

On the contrary, we believe that it is imperative for every society to have the means of addressing human rights violations through robust mechanisms within themselves. International scrutiny should be resorted to, only when such mechanisms are non-existent or have consistently failed.

For the afore-mentioned reasons, India will be abstaining on the vote.”

I thank you Madame Chairperson

*Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi,*  
<http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=530118097>

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## i. South Sudan

### 18. India's assistance to South Sudan, New Delhi, 3 August 2011

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

- (a) whether the newly formed South Sudan has sought India's assistance for its economic and technological development;
- (b) if so, the details thereof; and
- (c) the steps taken/being taken by the Government in this regard?

**Answer:** the Minister of State in the Ministry of External Affairs (E. Ahamed)

(a) & (b) Yes. Government of South Sudan has sought India's assistance for its economic and technological development which was conveyed during the first official visit of the Minister in the Office of the President of South Sudan, H.E. Ms. Priscilla Joseph Kuch, to India on April 28, 2011. During her talks with the Hon'ble Minister of External Affairs, H.E. Ms. Kuch, requested for India's assistance for the new state of South Sudan in the fields including health, agriculture, education, human resource development, rural development, animal husbandry, horticulture.

(c) Hon'ble Minister of State for External Affairs, Mr. E. Ahamed subsequently led a multi-disciplinary delegation to Juba, South Sudan, from June 12-15, 2011, which included representatives from Dept of Agriculture & Cooperation, Directorate General of Health Services, and Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas, to finalise a road map for cooperation in various fields.

India has offered US\$ 5 million grant for socio-economic development of South Sudan. The projects envisaged in this regard include a Vocational Training Centre; Rural Technology Park; Agricultural Seed Production-cum-Demonstration Centre (through Regional Economic Community); and a complete package of Pan-African E-Network Project that include tele-medicine and tele-education. In addition, special training courses are envisaged for capacity building in South Sudan which includes training in agriculture sector, food processing, rural development, oil & natural gas sector, and IT. India has also made a special offer of 75 ITEC slots to South Sudan.

*Source: Lok Sabha (House of the People), Unstarred Question no. 690 Asked by Somen Mitra, <http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=220217934>*

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## j. Turkey

### 19. Indo-Turkey Naval Exercise, New Delhi, 1 August 2011

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

- (a) whether the Indian Navy has held joint naval exercise with the in counter parts in Turkey in the recent past; and
- (b) if so, the details thereof indicating the scope of the exercise?

**Answer:** Minister of Defence (A.K. Antony)

(a) & (b): The Indian Navy has undertaken Passage Exercise (PASSEX) with the Turkish Navy on 10 and 11th July 2011 during routine visit of Turkish Navy ships to Mumbai. The scope of this exercise included over the horizon targeting exercise, manoeuvres by officers of the watch, etc.

*Source: Lok Sabha (House of the People), Unstarred Question no. 68 asked by Rajaiah Siricilla and Prabhakar Ponnamm,*

<http://164.100.47.132/LssNew/psearch/QResult15.aspx?qref=105233>

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## k. United Arab Emirates

### 20. UAE consulate in Kerala, New Delhi, 10 August 2011

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

- (a) the present status of opening of United Arab Emirates (UAE) Consulate in Kerala;
- (b) whether any location has been identified for the said Consulate;
- (c) if so, the details thereof; and
- (d) the time by which the said Consulate is likely to start functioning?

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

(a) On 13 July 2011, the Government of United Arab Emirates (UAE) conveyed to the Ministry of External Affairs that it would favourably consider opening a Consular Office in the State of Kerala. This issue is currently under discussion.

(b) to (d) Does not arise.

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*Source: Lok Sabha (House of the People), Unstarred Question no. 1643 Asked by K. P. Dhanapalan, <http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=220218070>*

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## Specific Issues

### 1. Hajj

#### **21. Passport for hajj applicants-2011, New Delhi 4 August 2011,**

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

- (a) the arrangements that have been made for issuing passports to the applicants for Hajj 2011;
- (b) the period within which these passports are being issued;
- (c) whether it is a fact that touts are operating at each RPO and Police extort money during verification;
- (d) whether it is also a fact that longer time is being taken in issuing passports to Muslims than to others; and
- (e) if so, steps taken to solve these problems?

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

(a) All Passport Offices have been instructed to issue full validity passport to Hajj pilgrims on priority basis on receipt of clear police verification report (PVR). Where PVR is required, but not received by the requisite deadline, the Passport Issuing Authority is required to issue Hajj passport valid for 8 months. The Passport Issuing Authority is, therefore, issuing Hajj passport valid for 8 months for Saudi Arabia only, subject to usual checks and formalities and the following:

- (i) Hajj cover number under seal and stamp of the Chief Executive Officer of Hajj Committee/Executive Officer, State Hajj Committee is submitted by the applicant, with reference to his pending application,

- (ii) Passport Offices(POs) who face a rush of applications from aspiring Hajj pilgrims are instructed to open special counters for acceptance of applications in liaison with the State Hajj Committee, whose authorised volunteers will be allowed to render assistance in such counters,
- (iii) All passport Officers have been specifically instructed to hold passport Adalats as and when required and extend due courtesies to avoid any inconvenience, and
- (iv) POs have also been instructed to nominate nodal officers to attend to the cases of Hajj applicants who would ensure that passports to Hajj pilgrims are issued well before the deadline.
- (b) All Hajj pilgrims selected by the Hajj Committee of India shall be given eight months validity passport irrespective of police verification.
- (c) This is a matter of law enforcement and, therefore, outside the purview of this Ministry. However, on behalf of the Ministry of External Affairs, whenever such instances are brought to our notice, we have taken up the matter with Police authorities on an urgent basis.
- (d) No Sir.
- (e) Does not arise.

*Source: Rajya Sabha (Council of States), Starred Question no. 72 Asked by Sabir Ali, <http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=220117944>*

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## **22. Meeting on hajj pilgrimage, New Delhi, 4 August 2011**

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

- (a) whether a meeting was held by him with the Members of Parliament in New Delhi on 7th March, 2011 to discuss matters relating to Hajj pilgrimage;
- (b) if so, the details of the issues discussed;
- (c) the consensus arrived at; and
- (d) the details of the follow-up action being taken thereon?

**Answer:** the Minister of State in the Ministry Of External Affairs (E. Ahamed)

- (a) Yes.
- (b) Issues discussed during the meeting were: i) Issues related to subsidy to Hajj pilgrims; ii) Scrapping Hajj Goodwill Delegations; iii) Hiring of accommodation in Mecca & Medina on long term basis; iv) Global tendering of air charter for the pilgrims; v) Sharing contents of the bilateral

Hajj Agreement signed between the Government of India and Saudi Arabia; vi) Abolition of PTO quota; vii) Regional balance in PTOs quota; viii) Inclusion of Ziyarat with Hajj pilgrimage; ix) Shifting of HCOI office from Mumbai to Delhi; x) Expeditious issuance of pilgrims' passports; xi) Coordination among Government, Hajj Committees and airlines; xii) Delays in arrival/departure of charter flights; xiii) Compensation on account of loss of baggage of pilgrims; xiv) Release of seats to MPs from Government quota; xv) Higher air fare in charter flights; xvi) Adopting Malaysian model of Tabung Haji; xvii) Khadim-ul-hujjaj etc.

(c) & (d) The views expressed are being given due consideration.

*Source: Rajya Sabha (Council of States), Unstarred Question no. 517 Asked by Sabir Ali, <http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=220117949>*

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### **23. Passports for Hajj pilgrimage, New Delhi, 17 August 2011**

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

- (a) whether the passports issued to Hajj pilgrims could be used for a longer period than for the shorter term during Hajj;
- (b) if so, the details thereof; and
- c) if not, the reasons therefor?

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

(a) to (c) All the 37 Passport Offices have been instructed by this Ministry to issue full validity passports for ten years to Hajj pilgrims on priority basis on receipt of clear Police Verification Reports (PVRs). However, where PVR is not received in time, the Passport Offices have been authorised to issue short validity passports for eight months to Hajj pilgrims. After performing the pilgrimage and surrender of the Hajj Passports, a full validity passport may be issued against the same application subject to receipt of a recommendatory PVR.

*Source: Lok Sabha (House of the People), Unstarred Question no. 2545 asked by Kadir Rana, <http://www.mea.gov.in/mystart.php?id=220218044>*

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### **24. Hajj Pilgrimage, New Delhi 17 August 2011**

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

- (a) whether a meeting was held by him with the Members of Parliament in New Delhi on 7th March, 2011 to discuss matters relating to Hajj Pilgrimage;
- (b) if so, the details of the issues discussed & consensus arrived at the meeting; and



(c) the follow-up action being taken thereon?

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

(a) Yes.

(b) & (c) Issues discussed during the meeting were: i) Issues relating to subsidy to Hajj pilgrims; ii) Scrapping Hajj Goodwill Delegations; iii) Hiring of accommodation in Mecca and Medina on long term basis; iv) Global tendering of air charter for the pilgrims; v) Sharing contents of the bilateral Hajj Agreement signed between the Government of India and Saudi Arabia; vi) Abolition of PTO quota; vii) Regional balance in PTOs quota; viii) Inclusion of Ziyarat with Hajj pilgrimage; ix) Shifting of Hajj Committee of India's office from Mumbai to Delhi; x) Expeditious issuance of pilgrims' passports; xi) Coordination among Government, Hajj Committees and airlines; xii) Delays in arrival/departure of charter flights; xiii) Compensation on account of loss of baggage of pilgrims; xiv) Release of seats to MPs from Government quota; xv) Higher air fare in charter flights; xvi) Adopting Malaysian model of Tabung Haji; xvii) Khadim-ul-hujjaj etc. The views expressed are being given due consideration.

*Source: Lok Sabha (House of the People), Unstarred Question No. 2643 asked by C.R. Patil, <http://www.mea.gov.in/mystart.php?id=220218055>*

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### **25. Additional hajj visa, New Delhi, 24 August 2011**

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

(a) the status of obtaining additional Hajj Visa for the country from Saudi Arabia; and

(b) the actions initiated to ensure safety and medical assistance to senior citizens who are over 70 years while performing Hajj?

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

(a) The Government of India has requested the Saudi authorities for an additional quota for Hajj – 2011. The response from the Saudi Authorities is awaited.

(b) The Government of India makes exhaustive arrangements to ensure safety of all Hajjis and provides extensive medical facilities to them. These include 12 Branch Offices in different parts of Mecca and 4 Branch Offices in different parts of Medina to assist and serve Indian pilgrims facing problems. 24X7 Helpline is operated by the Consulate for addressing problems of the Hajjis. One 50-bedded hospital, 17 branch dispensaries and temporary dispensaries function in Mecca, Medina and Jeddah Hajj terminal during Hajj season to attend medical problems of Indian Hajj Pilgrims. Temporary dispensaries are also operated at Mina & Arafat during the Hajj Week in the Embassy camps. Doctors and Paramedics are sent on short term deputation to man

these hospitals and dispensaries. Medicines are supplied from India for these hospitals and dispensaries. In addition, our Consulate in Jeddah also operates mobile hospitals and ambulances for the Indian Hajjis.

*Source: Lok Sabha (House of the People), Unstarred Question no. 3496 asked by M.K. Raghavan, <http://www.mea.gov.in/mystart.php?id=220218107>*

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### **26. Saudi Arabia offers additional 10,000 seats for Hajj 2011 to Indian New Delhi, 25 August 2011**

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has announced additional quota of 10,000 seats for the Hajj Season 2011 for use by India. The entire lot of these 10,000 seats have been transferred to Hajj Committee of India, Mumbai. The seats will be distributed to the States/ Union Territories that have received applications in excess of originally allotted quota on the basis of proportionate Muslim population of the State/ UT concerned.

*Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, New Delhi, <http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=530218111>*

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### **27. Problems of Hajj Pilgrims, New Delhi, 25 August**

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

- (a) whether it is a fact that about 1,72,000 Indian pilgrims go for Hajj every year;
- (b) whether Indian Hajj pilgrims are facing a lot of trouble and inconvenience during their journey to Saudi Arabia;
- (c) the number of Hajj pilgrims who went on Hajj for the last three years from North- East States;
- (d) if so, the details of difficulties faced by the pilgrims; and
- (e) the steps taken by Government to stop their inconvenience?

**Answer:** The Minister of state in the Ministry of External Affairs (E. Ahamed)

(a) Yes.

(b) to (e) It is the constant endeavour of the Government and the Hajj Committee of India to keep making improvements in the arrangements for the Hajj pilgrims and provide them with better facilities after taking into account the feedback received from all concerned. Some complaints are received from the pilgrims and issues raised therein are dealt with in the best possible manner. The number of pilgrims who performed Hajj from North East States during last three years is tabulated below:-

Name of States	Hajj – 2008	Hajj – 2009	Hajj - 2010
Assam	3021	3057	3674
Manipur	359	268	307
Tripura	111	60	103

*Source: Rajya Sabha (Council of States), Unstarred Question No. 2509 asked by Mrs. Naznin Faruque, <http://www.mea.gov.in/mystart.php?id=220118168>*

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## Multilateral Issues/ Regional Issues

### 28. Tri-lateral initiative, New Delhi, 3 August 2011

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

- (a) whether it is true that India will be a part of a tri-lateral initiative with Afghanistan and Iran;
- (b) if so, the details of the objectives of the summit; and
- (c) the nature of ties between India and Iran presently in terms of infrastructure projects in Afghanistan?

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

(a) to (c) At present India is not part of any trilateral initiative with Afghanistan and Iran. However a Memorandum of Understanding on “The Development and Construction of Transit and Transport Infrastructures in Chabahar-Milak-Zaranj-Delaram route between Iran, India and Afghanistan” was signed in January 2003 after a trilateral Ministerial level meeting between India, Iran and Afghanistan in Tehran. India has completed the Zaranj-Delaram highway in Afghanistan as part of its bilateral assistance program in Afghanistan. Discussions are ongoing with Iran on the development of Chabahar port and related infrastructure projects.

*Source: Lok Sabha (House of the People), Unstarred Question no. 489 Asked by Uday Singh, <http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=220217903>*

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### **29. Impact of turmoil in Gulf, New Delhi, 17 August 2011**

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

- (a) whether the Government has made any assessment on the impact of the turmoil in the gulf countries on India's interests;
- (b) if so, the details thereof; and
- (c) the details of the steps taken by the Government for the safety of life and property of Indian nationals in the gulf countries?

**Answer:** the Minister of State in the Ministry of External Affairs (E. Ahamed)

(a) Yes.

(b) India enjoys close relations with the countries of the Gulf region. About 6 million Indians live and work in the Gulf region which is one of our largest trading partners and an important source of oil and gas. There has been no visible impact of recent developments in the region on our bilateral trade including import of oil.

(c) Government of India is closely monitoring the situation in the Gulf region. Ministry of External Affairs is in close contact with governments through our Missions there to ensure the safety and well being of Indian nationals. Ministry of External Affairs had issued travel advisories for our nationals in Bahrain to avoid non-essential travel and to those in Yemen to leave the country. 698 Indian nationals have so far been evacuated from Yemen in view of civil disturbances during last six months. Missions are in close touch with the Indian community through Indian Associations advising them from time to time. 24/7 helplines are also available to our nationals. The Government has constituted an Inter-Ministerial Committee of Secretaries under the Chairmanship of Cabinet Secretary to examine issues relating to repatriation, relief and rehabilitation of Indian nationals affected by the recent developments in West Asia, Gulf and North Africa regions. State Governments concerned have also been requested to assist the returnees and provide relief where necessary.

*Source: Lok Sabha (House of the People), Unstarred Question no. 2590 asked by Prof. Ram Shankar, <http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=220218049>*

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### **30. Advice to Arab Nations, New Delhi, 17 August 2011**

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

- (a) whether it is a fact that India will not offer unsolicited advice to Arab nations; and
- (b) if so, the details thereof?

**Answer:** the Minister of State in the Ministry of External Affairs (E. Ahamed)

(a) & (b) While India's Foreign Policy is guided by the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries, India does articulate its views on international issues and developments including on developments in the Arab world.

*Source: Lok Sabha (House of the People), Unstarred Question no. 2673 Asked by Rayapati Sambasiva Rao, <http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=220218060>*

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## **Miscellaneous**

### **31. Workers from Rajasthan in Gulf, New Delhi, 11 August 2011**

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

- (a) whether it is a fact that thousands of labourers from Rajasthan go to gulf countries for employment every year;
- (b) whether Government has received any complaints with regard to the exploitation of workers in year 2010-11;
- (c) if so, the details of the action taken in this regard; and
- (d) the details of the measures taken by Government so far to stop the exploitation of the workers?

**Answer:** the Minister of State in the Ministry of External Affairs (E. Ahamed)

- (a) It is estimated that about 6 million Indians from various states including Rajasthan live and work in the Gulf region.
- (b) The Government of India does receive complaints regarding problems being faced by Indian workers in Gulf countries.

(c) & (d) The Government of India through its Missions in Gulf countries has taken several measures and initiatives to protect the rights of Indian workers and to address the problem of exploitation of workers. Whenever complaints are received, they are taken up by the Missions with the concerned employers and/or with the local authorities on priority basis with a view to arrive at an amicable resolution of the grievances. The measures taken by the Indian Missions include: i) a dedicated Community Welfare Wing; ii) compulsory attestation of Service Agreement of all household workers; iii) open House sessions on publicized days to provide additional informal platform of grievance redressal and information; iv) provision of advice and assistance to Indian workers through local law firms as well as through free legal counselling sessions; v) provision of shelter to Indian women workers in distress; vi) setting up of Labour Welfare Fund to financially assist overseas Indian workers in distress, extending emergency medical care, providing air passage to stranded Indians in need, expenditure on incidentals and for airlifting the mortal remains to India or local burial /cremation of the deceased workers and vii) setting up of 24X7 helplines by Missions. These steps have enhanced our Missions' availability to Indian workers abroad.

*Source: Rajya Sabha (Council of States), Unstarred Question no. 1299 Asked by Ashk Ali Tak, <http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=220118032>*

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### **32. Evacuation of Indians, New Delhi, 11 August 2011**

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

- (a) whether the Government has appealed to the Indian citizens in Yemen to leave the country as soon as possible;
- (b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor;
- (c) the number of persons of Indian origin evacuated from different countries in Middle-East and North Africa on account of unrest in these countries, country-wise;
- (d) the steps taken/proposed to be taken to evacuate/protect the remaining persons living in these countries;
- (e) whether the Government has provided/proposes to provide any financial help/rehabilitation package, to the persons returning from these countries; and
- (f) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

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

(a) Yes.

(b) & (c) 698 Indian nationals have so far been evacuated from Yemen in view of civil disturbances during last six months. Due to the turmoil in Egypt during January-February, 2011, Air India arranged three special flights, on 'no profit' basis, from Cairo to Delhi for Indian citizens living in Egypt and stranded Indian tourists who wanted to leave Egypt but were unable to find booking in available commercial flights. Around 670 Indians availed of these special Air India flights to return to India. As the situation deteriorated in Libya, more than 16,200 Indian nationals desirous of returning to India were evacuated from Libya by all means, i.e. by air, sea, and land.

(d) The Embassy of India, Sana'a (Yemen) is in the process of obtaining exit visas for those who are staying without proper documentation in Yemen. A couple of thousand Indian nationals have chosen to stay back in Yemen despite Government of India's advisory as they have been assured of their safety by their Yemeni and non-Yemeni employers. With the situation in Egypt improving many of the evacuated Indians have since returned. As far as Libya is concerned, there are about 2,000 Indians who still remain there. Our Mission in Tripoli presently manned by local staff is in regular touch with them.

(e) & (f) The Government has constituted an Inter-Ministerial Committee of Secretaries under the Chairmanship of Cabinet Secretary to examine issues relating to repatriation, relief and rehabilitation of Indian nationals affected by the recent developments in West Asia, Gulf and North Africa regions. State Governments concerned were also requested to assist them and provide relief where necessary.

*Source: Lok Sabha (House of the People), Unstarred Question no. 1783 Asked by Dara Singh Chauhan, Dilip Kumar Mansukhlal Gandhi, S.R. Jeya Durai, Suresh Kumar Shetkar, and S.S. Ramasubbu, <http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=220218087>*

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