

# **INDIA SPEAKS**

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

**No. 27**

**October 2011**

## **Bilateral Issues**

### **a. Iran**

#### **1. Resumption of Oil Imports From Iran, New Delhi, 6 September 2011**

**Question:**

- (a) whether it is a fact that the oil imports to India from Iran are likely to resume soon;
- (b) if so, the details of terms and conditions agreed upon by Iran; and
- (c) whether it is long term solution or a short term one?

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

- (a) to (c) There was no interruption in oil import from Iran to India's refineries, although in respect of two oil refining companies there was some delay in the shipments during the month of August, 2011. The terms and conditions between the Indian refineries and the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) remain the same, i.e., as per the term contract between the two sides for 2011-12. After the Asian Clearing Union was withdrawn by the RBI in December 2010, the government has operationalized a new payment mechanism under which payments are being made to NIOC, and the system is working well at this juncture.

*Source: Rajya Sabha (Council of States), Unstarred Question No. 3694 asked by Mr. K.V.P. Ramachandra Rao, <http://164.100.47.5/qsearch/QResult.aspx>*

#### **2. Press Briefing by Foreign Secretary on PM's visit to UNGA, New York, 24 September 2011**

Middle East Institute @ New Delhi, [www.mei.org.in](http://www.mei.org.in)

...Prime Minister, as I said, met President Ahmadinejad of Iran. EAM and Foreign Minister Salehi were both present during this meeting. The two leaders reviewed bilateral relations. It was the first meeting between the two after a long time. They first of all dealt with the political dialogue, and President Ahmadinejad renewed his invitation to PM to visit Iran. PM accepted in principle and said the dates would be worked out. The agenda of bilateral visits also includes in the near future, a visit by the Speaker of our Lok Sabha who will be visiting Iran shortly.

The two leaders felt that the next meeting of the Joint Economic Commission should be held fairly soon. EAM on our side and the Foreign Minister of Iran would co-chair this. As soon as mutually convenient dates are worked out, preferably during the course of this year, the meeting will be held.

The two leaders also discussed the bilateral relations including major projects. They reviewed the situation in the region including Afghanistan. They also discussed developments in West Asia and North Africa. They agreed that there was need for further exchange of views on a regular basis between the two countries. They both noted the importance of the Nonaligned Movement, of which Iran is now the Chairperson...

**Question:** Sir, there was some unpleasantness yesterday after President Ahmadinejad's speech. The US delegation walked out because of certain remarks he made. Is this unpleasantness in any way - given the fact that the Prime Minister has met Mr. Ahmadinejad today and had a substantial dialogue, agreed to a visit, and so on - likely to have any impact on the India-US relationship?

**Foreign Secretary:** Actually the Prime Minister and President Ahmadinejad meeting was planned before we came here. The idea was basically to focus on our bilateral relationship, and also to have an exchange of views. As I said, Prime Minister took particular note of the fact that the Iranian President would be the Chair of the Nonaligned Movement.

**Question:** Anything on Iran gas pipeline?

**Foreign Secretary:** Gas pipeline was not discussed today to the best of my knowledge, but they discussed a whole series of projects between the two countries including potential cooperation in the field of hydrocarbons.

**Question:** Foreign Secretary, in the discussion with the Iranian leader on Afghanistan, was there any talk on the role of various regional players in Afghanistan?

**Foreign Secretary:** There was a feeling that the regional countries must consult each other much more and that certainly India and Iran should have regular interchanges on the situation in Afghanistan and a peaceful resolution of those issues.

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

<http://www.mea.gov.in/mystart.php?id=530318312>

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## **b. Libya**

### **3. India supports Transitional National Council of Libya in the UN, New Delhi, 17 September 2011**

India extended support to the acceptance of credentials of the delegation of the Transitional National Council of Libya led by its President Mustafa Abdel Jalil to attend the forthcoming UN General Assembly session in New York.

India has been in contact with the Transitional National Council in Benghazi and Cairo. India has also participated as an observer in the Libyan Contact Group meeting in Istanbul in July and recently at the MOS level at the Paris Conference on Libya jointly organised by France and UK on September 1. India will also be participating in the High Level Meeting on Libya scheduled to be held in the margins of the UNGA on September 20, called by the UN Secretary General. In this meeting, India will reiterate its willingness to extend all possible assistance to the people of Libya in their political transition, rebuilding and reconstruction activities.

Our Cd'A to Libya, currently based in Tunis, has formally established contact with the TNC Mission in Tunis. We have given humanitarian assistance of US\$1 million through UN-OCHA to Libya and assistance of another US\$2 million is being processed.

*Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi,*  
<http://www.mea.gov.in/mystart.php?id=530218281>

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### **4. PM's on-board media interaction enroute to Delhi from Frankfurt, Onboard from Frankfurt to New Delhi, 27 September 2011**

**Question:** ON foreign armed intervention in Libya and other countries?

**Answer –** Well I was referring to the situation as it has developed in Libya. My worry is that despite what the western powers are saying about Libya, that they their success in getting rid of Gadaffi, there are still signs that Libya may well be entrapped in civil war like Somalia. And if it goes in the Somalian way it will be in nobody's interest.

*Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi,*  
<http://www.mea.gov.in/mystart.php?id=530318326>

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## **c. Syria**

### **5. Press Briefing by Foreign Secretary on PM's visit to UNGA, New York, 24 September 2011**

**Question:** Mr. Secretary, I wanted to ask about India's position on developments in Syria. There is increasing dismay among the American diplomats that India and the United States do not see eye to eye on all these developments in Libya and Syria. Do you foresee any convergence on this? And what is the position of India on the developments there?

**Foreign Secretary:** If I can just refer to the BRICS Foreign Ministers statement which outlines some of these issues, they say the situation in Syria is complex and nothing should be done to exacerbate it; the Syrian authorities should exercise restraint in dealing with protestors and respect their human rights; at the same time political reforms should be implemented expeditiously; and the opposition groups should participate in an inclusive political process. I think the emphasis is, among countries like ours, on the need for the international community to be supportive of inclusive political process, but these necessarily should be led by those countries and the groups within those countries themselves.

*Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi,*  
<http://www.mea.gov.in/mystart.php?id=530318312>

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#### **d. South Sudan**

##### **6. Media Briefing by Foreign Secretary on day 3 of PM's visit to New York, New York, 24 September 2011**

PM later met President Salva Kiir of South Sudan. External Affairs Minister and the South Sudan Foreign Minister were both present at that meeting. PM began by again conveying his congratulations to the leader of the new State and the manner in which it had handled its emergence on to the world stage. The President conveyed his thanks to PM and recalled with particular pleasure India's presence at the celebrations of South Sudan's Independence where, as you may recall, India was represented by our Vice-President. Minister in President Salva Kiir's office, Madam Cook, had visited India a few months ago.

President Kiir referred to the priorities and the needs of South Sudan which he described as being very great. But he drew particular attention to the need for assistance in areas such as medical facilities, agriculture, irrigation, education, infrastructure and energy. He suggested that India could provide assistance in this regard. And PM responded with the assurance that India would extend all assistance possible, particularly for capacity-building and human resource development in these areas.

President Kiir also referred to the scope for development of new railway lines to link South Sudan with the rest of the railway network in Africa and also access to the sea. He also spoke of the importance of Indian participation in the development of oil resources, hydrocarbon resources of South Sudan. It was then felt that the discussion should be followed up through an exchange of visits to assess the scope for Indian expertise participating in the development of

South Sudan, particularly in fields like medicine, agriculture, railways, infrastructure and then to draw up a plan of action. The two Foreign Ministers have been charged with taking this forward.

PM invited President Kiir to visit India, and the President said he would be happy take up the invitation as soon as the immediate priority of setting up the political institutions of the new country was completed.

*Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi,*  
<http://www.mea.gov.in/mystart.php?id=530318315>

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## **e. Turkey**

### **7. Indo-Turkey Naval Exercise, New Delhi, 7 September 2011**

The Indian Navy undertook a Passage Exercise (PASSEX) with the Turkish Navy on 10th and 11th July 2011 during the routine visit of Turkish Navy ship to Mumbai. The scope of this exercise included over the horizon targeting exercise, visual signalling exercise, manoeuvres by officers of the watch etc. The exercise was part of routine schedule of the participating naval units and no additional expenditure was incurred specifically for the exercise with Turkish navy.

This information was given by Defence Minister Mr. AK Antony in a written reply to Mrs. T. Ratna Bai and Mr. Mohd. Ali khan in Rajya Sabha today.

*Source: Press Information Bureau, New Delhi,*  
<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=75703>

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### **8. India and Turkey to Cooperate in Coal Sector, New Delhi, 13 September 2011**

Mr. Sriprakash Jaiswal, Minister of Coal, Government of India met Mr. Taner YILDIZ, Minister for Energy and Natural Resources, Government of Turkey and other officials on the sidelines of the 22nd World Mining Congress inaugural session on 12th September 2011 at Istanbul, Turkey. Mr. jaiswal is leading an Indian delegation there to participate in World Mining Congress.

Both the Ministers discussed about the energy situation in the two countries, particularly the field of coal mining. India's Coal Minister offered technical cooperation to develop coal and lignite deposits and coal washing in Turkey. Turkey's Energy Minister evinced keen interest for technical cooperation with India in coal mining and clean coal technologies. He said that Turkey is planning to set up some 15000 MW coal based power generation plants and requested Indian companies to participate in the tenders. Both the ministers agreed for future cooperation in coal related areas.

*Source: Press Information Bureau, New Delhi,*  
<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=75921>

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## **f. United Arab Emirates**

### **9. India and UAE sign revised MoU on Manpower, New Delhi, 13 September 2011**

Mr. Vayalar Ravi, Union Minister of Overseas Indian Affairs and Civil Aviation and Mr. Saqr Ghobash Saeed Ghobash, Minister of Labour of United Arab Emirates signed a revised Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on manpower, here today. Addressing on the occasion, Mr. Ravi said that this MoU will strengthen the symbiotic relationship and mutual cooperation between the two countries. He said that the e-governance in migration project is a major initiative taken by the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs. He also hailed the measures taken by the UAE government to improve the condition of workers in UAE.

The revised MoU will boost the initiative of the Ministry in implementing Web Based Attestation Procedure for employment contracts for emigrant workers in UAE by the Embassy of India, Abu Dhabi. A need has been felt over the years to revise the MoU, which was signed between India and the UAE in December, 2006 to address various problems faced by the Indian emigrant workers in the UAE. After detailed negotiations between the two countries, a revised MoU was finalized and signed today. The MoU in the field of manpower between India and the UAE provides for the following:

- i. Facilitation of the recruitment of Indian manpower for working in the UAE;
- ii. Broad procedure for employment of workers;
- iii. Responsibilities of the employers and workers;
- iv. Exchange of knowledge and experience in job-creation and generation of employment opportunity;
- v. Protection and welfare of workers under the labour laws and regulations of the host country;
- vi. Authentication of the work contract between the Employer and the employee by the Ministry of Labour, Government of UAE; and
- vii. Constitution of a Joint Committee comprising of at least three Members each from both the Governments to implement the provisions of the MoU.

It is estimated that there are approximately 1.75 million Indians in the UAE, constituting the largest expatriate community in that country. Out of this, about 1.35 million are emigrant workers, mostly employed in construction, services and household sectors. India-UAE trade, valued at US\$ 180 million per annum in the 1970s, is today around US\$44 billion making UAE, India's largest trading partner. There is an estimated US\$6 billion UAE investment in India of which about US\$ 1.92 billion is in the form of foreign direct investment, while the remaining as portfolio investment. UAE is the tenth biggest investor in India in terms of FDI. The annual remittances made by the large Indian community in UAE (estimated to be around

1.75 million) amount to over US \$5 billion. They had actively invested in the past in the various bonds floated by India such as Resurgent India Bonds and the India Millennium Bonds.

*Source: Press Information Bureau, New Delhi,*  
<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=75938>

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## Specific Issues

### g. Hajj

#### **10. Representation for Increasing Hajj Quota, New Delhi, 8 September 2011**

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

- (a) whether Government has received representations from various quarters including the Members of Parliament for increasing the Hajj quota;
- (b) if so, the details thereof; and
- (c) the action taken by Government in this regard?

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

- (a) to (c) Representations were received from many States for increasing their Hajj quota. 4239 seats from the Government quota have been allotted to States/Union Territories having excess applications than their originally allotted quota. In addition, 10,000 additional seats given by Saudi Authorities have also been given to the Hajj Committee of India for distribution among States & Union Territories in similar manner.

*Source: Rajya Sabha (Council of States), Unstarred Question No. 3907 asked by Mr. N. Balganga, <http://www.mea.gov.in/mystart.php?id=220118231>*

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### Palestinian issue

#### **11. Statement by Minister of State for External Affairs Mrs. Preneet Kaur at the NAM Commemorative Meeting, Belgrade, 5 September 2011**

...Our thoughts also turn to the people of Palestine, who have endured great suffering and hardship. With the latest renewed impetus to the peace process in the Middle East, we hope that this would lead to a comprehensive, just, lasting and peaceful settlement of the Palestinian issue...

*Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi,*  
<http://www.mea.gov.in/mystart.php?id=530118207>

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## **12. Media Briefing by Foreign Secretary on PM's visit to New York for UNGA Session, 17 September 2011, New Delhi**

...I would like to say by way of background that India's commitment to the Palestinian cause is long established. India was the first non-Arab country to recognize the State of Palestine on the 16th of November, 1988 following the Algiers Declaration of the 15th of November of that year. While we remain hopeful that the talks and negotiations would resume leading to a comprehensive peace process for final resolution of the Middle East conflict, India will support the Resolution on Palestine seeking membership of the UN...

*Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi,*  
<http://www.mea.gov.in/mystart.php?id=530318283>

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## **13. Statement by the Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh at the General Debate of the 66th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, New York, 24 September 2011**

..The Palestinian question still remains unresolved and a source of great instability and violence. India is steadfast in its support for the Palestinian people's struggle for a sovereign, independent, viable and united state of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital, living within secure and recognizable borders side by side and at peace with Israel. We look forward to welcoming Palestine as an equal member of the United Nations...

*Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi,*  
<http://www.mea.gov.in/mystart.php?id=530118311>

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## **14. Press Briefing by Foreign Secretary on PM's visit to UNGA, New York, 24 September 2011**

**Question:** Staying with Iran, you said you discussed West Asia. On this whole Palestinian issue and Mr. Obama's speech today, what is India's stand?

**Foreign Secretary:** I do not think there was a discussion on the speech per se but they both reiterated their commitment that they support the Palestinian attempt to seek membership of the United Nations.

**Question:** Foreign Secretary, in tomorrow's speech that the Prime Minister makes, is there likely to be any reference to Palestinian statehood or to the Middle East region? Is there anything more that you can tell us about his possible references to the crisis in the Middle East region?

**Foreign Secretary:** I will comment on the Prime Minister's speech after it is over. So, tomorrow you are free to ask me any question you want to on the speech. But let me say without necessarily referring to the speech that our position on the Palestinian issue is an established



position; it is well-known. As far back as 1988 we recognised the Palestinian State. So, we should not be surprised if there is a reiteration of that. But I would not like to comment on the contents of the PM's speech.

*Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi,*  
<http://www.mea.gov.in/mystart.php?id=530318312>

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### **15. Media Briefing by Foreign Secretary on day 3 of PM's visit to New York, New York, 24 September 2011**

...The Prime Minister made a categorical reference again to our support for Palestine. He addressed that issue very clearly...

*Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi,*  
<http://www.mea.gov.in/mystart.php?id=530318315>

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## **Multilateral Issues/ Regional Issues**

### **h. India and the Middle East**

#### **16. Statement by Minister of State for External Affairs Mrs. Preneet Kaur at the NAM Commemorative Meeting, Belgrade, 5 September 2011**

...We are also witnessing challenging developments in North Africa and West Asia. India would continue to work to ensure stability and prosperity of the region and supports the democratic aspirations of the people of the region...

*Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi,*  
<http://www.mea.gov.in/mystart.php?id=530118207>

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#### **17. Impact of Turbulence in Arab Countries, New Delhi, 8 September 2011**

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

- (a) the present and future impact of the turbulence in the Arab countries on the political and economic issues of our country; and
- (b) the details thereof ?

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

(a) & (b) The Government of India follows closely developments in Arab countries. This region is an important economic partner, being a large supplier of oil and gas, a major trading partner, and home to around 6 million Indians.

The impact of turbulence in the affected countries is firstly to the physical safety and security of the Indian population leading, at times, to their evacuation such as from Libya. Secondly on

India's bilateral trade with some of the affected countries, and on Indian companies working there.

*Source: Rajya Sabha (Council of States), Unstarred Question no. 3913 asked by Dr.Yogenra P. Trivedi, <http://www.mea.gov.in/mystart.php?id=220118231>*

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### **18. Media Briefing by Foreign Secretary on PM's visit to New York for UNGA Session, 17 September 2011, New Delhi**

...The Middle East and North Africa are witnessing socio-political upheaval and the situation is in a flux. During our membership of the Security Council since the 1st of January 2011, we have been underlining the need to resolve conflicts through negotiations and diplomatic means rather than the use of force. We will continue to encourage political and diplomatic processes for solutions to the problems of member nations...

*Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, <http://www.mea.gov.in/mystart.php?id=530318283>*

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### **19. Statement by the Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh prior to his departure to New York, New Delhi, 21 September 2011**

..The West Asia, North Africa and Gulf regions have seen major upheavals and there is uncertainty about the shape of things to come in this crucial part of the world in the period ahead. The Palestine question remains unresolved... During my visit, I look forward to holding bilateral meetings with the Presidents of Iran, South Sudan...

*Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, <http://www.mea.gov.in/mystart.php?id=530118298>*

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### **20. Statement by the Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh at the General Debate of the 66th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, New York, 24 September 2011**

...There has been unprecedented social and political upheaval in West Asia, the Gulf and North Africa. People of these regions are demanding the right to shape their own future...

*Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, <http://www.mea.gov.in/mystart.php?id=530118311>*

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## Miscellaneous

### 21. Press Briefing by Foreign Secretary on PM's visit to UNGA, New York, 24 September 2011

**Question:** Sir, United States and Israel are almost threatening Iran. In our discussion with the Prime Minister, did the issue of nuclear programme of Iran, especially our worries including with Pakistan come up?

**Foreign Secretary:** As I said, the emphasis of our discussion was on the bilateral relationship, and this issue did not figure in that.

**Question:** The US position and our's on Palestine issue are quite contrary to each other. Iran is also another area where our stand and US stand are quite different. Again on West Asia policy of US, our critical appraisal is very clear. But Indian PM's meet with the Iranian President and there is no meeting with the US counterpart. So, can we say that this a reflection of the state of Indo-US relationship

**Foreign Secretary:** No, I would not say that. The fact that the Prime Minister actually arrived in New York after the President of the US had left made the possibility of a bilateral meeting between the two leaders not feasible. But we are planning that there will be a meeting between the External Affairs Minister and the Secretary of State probably on Monday subject to confirmation.

*Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi,  
<http://www.mea.gov.in/mystart.php?id=530318312>*

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### 22. Media Briefing by Foreign Secretary on day 3 of PM's visit to New York, New York, 24 September 2011

...EAM had a separate meeting with the UK Foreign Secretary as he is called, the Foreign Minister of UK...The two leaders exchanged views on matters before the Security Council, in particular Libya, Syria and the reform of the Security Council...

**Question:** You have pointed out this line in the speech, "Societies cannot be reordered from outside through military force". Would that also, therefore, enlarge also to Libya and Syria where India has a different viewpoint in the UN Security Council compared to say countries like

the United States? Secondly, is there anything more that can you tell us about the upcoming meeting with Secretary Clinton on Monday? Just any indication of the agenda for that meeting?

**Foreign Secretary:** First of all, I think the reference was not intended specifically to refer to any one situation, but it was a generalized response to a trend we are seeing in which, it started perhaps with Libya where a particular situation in the way it was developing, the UN Security Council did pass a Resolution and then we ended up with a campaign in which one side was supported. I think the idea was just to draw attention to the established principle of noninterference in the internal affairs of other countries; and that the role of the international community is to be as helpful as it can to assist countries in the stage of transition but from outside; that the actual political changes within a country have to be led by that country itself; and it is the role of the international community, perhaps the regional organizations taking the lead and the UN also to assist in this process. I think that was the intention.

*Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi,*  
<http://www.mea.gov.in/mystart.php?id=530318315>

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