

INDIA SPEAKS

(Monthly Digest of Official Indian Statements on Middle East)

No. 35

June 2012

Bilateral Issues

a. Bahrain

1. Official Visit of Crown Prince and Deputy Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, Kingdom of Bahrain to India, New Delhi, 29 May 2012

His Royal Highness, Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Crown Prince and Deputy Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, Kingdom of Bahrain will pay an Official Visit to India from 30 May-01 June 2012 at the invitation of Hon'ble Vice President Shri Mohammad Hamid Ansari. The Crown Prince of Bahrain would be accompanied by a high level Ministerial delegation, senior officials and businessmen. This is the second visit of the Crown Prince to India; the last one was in March 2007.

The Crown Prince will reach Mumbai first where business/industry meetings have been organized for the high-powered delegation accompanying HRH. The Crown Prince will meet the Governor of Maharashtra in Mumbai.

During his stay in New Delhi, the Crown Prince will meet Hon'ble President Mrs. Pratibha Devisingh Patil, Hon'ble Vice President, Mr. Mohammad Hamid Ansari who will host a banquet in his honour and Hon'ble Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh. Hon'ble Minister of External Affairs, Mr. S. M. Krishna will call on the Crown Prince.

India and Bahrain enjoy historically close and friendly relations. Presence of nearly 350,000 Indian nationals out of a total of 1.2 million residents in Bahrain is an important aspect of India's bilateral relations with Bahrain. Trade and investment cooperation is expanding with trade at present being US\$1.5 billion during 2010-11.

The visit of the Crown Prince is expected to provide further impetus to our multifaceted engagement with the Kingdom of Bahrain.

Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi,
<http://www.mea.gov.in/mystart.php?id=530219562>

b. Egypt

2. 150th birth anniversary celebrations of Rabindranath Tagore in Egypt, Cairo, 7 May 2012

Closing Ceremony, 14 May 2012 at MACIC

The Maulana Azad Centre for Indian Culture (MACIC) will be organizing the closing ceremony of the 150th birth anniversary celebrations of Asia's first Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore (1861 – 1941) at the Centre's premises on 14 May 2012 at 6.30 p.m. The event will be presided by H.E Mr R Swaminathan, Ambassador of India and the chief guest will be H.E Mr Hossam Nassar, First Under Secretary for Foreign Cultural Relations from the Egyptian Ministry of Culture.

The event will include remarks by the Director of MACIC Suchitra Durai, speeches by Tagore experts; a cultural programme including rendering of Rabindra sangeet (songs composed by Tagore) and Rabindra nritya (dance style of the Tagore institution Santiniketan) and award of prizes to winners of the Tagore essay writing competition organized by MACIC in cooperation with the Department of English of Cairo University. Excerpts from Tagore films and documentaries will also be screened. The event will be followed by a reception.

Since May 2011, MACIC has organized several high-profile events to commemorate the birth anniversary of one of India's greatest cultural icons including an inaugural event held in May 2011 in collaboration with the Bangladesh Embassy in Cairo at which there was a fascinating speech by eminent Egyptian economist and thinker Prof Galal Amin and cultural programme by members of the Bangladeshi community in Cairo; two exhibitions related to Tagore held in July 2011 and inaugurated by the Egyptian Minister of Culture H.E Dr Emad Abou Ghazi at El Bab gallery at the Opera House complex; a literary seminar held in September 2011 at the Egyptian Supreme Council for Culture chaired by eminent Egyptian poet Abdel Moaty Hegazy in which two well known Indian experts of Tagore from India Prof Anisur Rahman and Prof Hossainur Rahman participated; a lecture held at MACIC in October 2011 chaired by renowned novelist Gamal Ghitani; a Tagore essay competition launched in December 2011 in cooperation with the Department of English of Cairo University; visit to Egypt in January 2012 of a Rabindra sangeet troupe led by Sumitra Guha and dance drama troupe led by Dr Kaveri Chatterjee, sponsored by the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) which gave 7 splendid performances in Cairo, Alexandria, Ismailia and Beni Suef; unveiling of a portrait of Tagore, gifted by ICCR to the people of Egypt, at the House of Poetry, Cairo in March 2012 by External Affairs Minister of India H.E Mr S.M Krishna and Egyptian Minister of Culture H.E Dr Shaker Abdel Hameed; a retrospective of films based on Tagore stories "Tagore Film Festival", organized at the Artistic

Creativity Centre, Opera House Complex in April 2012 commencing with a panel discussion on the films by eminent film critics Dr Rafik al Sabban and Dr Khairiya al Beshlawy.

All events have been organized with the sponsorship of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations, the agency responsible for India's cultural diplomacy and with the constant support and cooperation of the Ministry of Culture, Arab Republic of Egypt.

For further details, please contact the Centre at: Tel: 23933396 / 23960071; Fax: 23936572; e-mail: macic@indembcairo.com

Source: Embassy of India, Egypt,

<http://www.indembcairo.com/Web%20Pages/Archives%20Eng%202012/May%202007.htm>

3. Indian Non- profit Organization SKG Sangha signs MOU with Egypt Bio Mass for 100 biogas plants, Cairo, 17 May 2012

SKG Sangha, a leading Indian NGO in the field of renewable energy will partner with Egypt bio mass, in cooperation with UNDP and the Egyptian Ministry of State for Environmental Affairs to implement 100 biogas plants in Egypt.

The signing of the MOU will be held on 21 May 2012 at the Sofitel Maadi at 12:00 AM in the presence of H.E. Mostafa Hussein Kamel, Minister of Environmental Affairs of the Arab Republic of Egypt and H.E. R. Swaminathan, the Ambassador of India to Egypt.

SKG Sangha operates in the field of bio-gas, vermicompost, eco-stoves, rain water harvesting and solar power and has implemented several projects in India and other countries. In recognition of their work, SKG Sangha has received several awards including the Ashden international award for sustainable energy in 2007 and the Tech Museum award in 2008.

There have been many innovations in bio-gas production in India like biogas plants generating electricity using locally available rice-husk. India's renewable energy capacity is 20 GW, which is 11 per cent of her total power generation capacity. In the last decade alone, India's installed capacity in Renewable Energy has risen from about 3% of the total installed capacity to 11%.

India aims to take it to over 20% in the next decade with a capacity of over 70,000 MW. Egypt has a vision for increasing its renewable energy to 20% by 2020 and therefore, the possibilities for cooperation between Egypt and India are immense and this cooperation between India and Egypt is yet another milestone in the joint march of the two countries.

Source: Embassy of India, New Delhi,

<http://www.indembcairo.com/Web%20Pages/Archives%20Eng%202012/May%202017.htm>

C. Iran

4. Iran's nuclear issue, New Delhi, 9 May 2012

Question:

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

- (a) Whether the increased differences on the nuclear issue of Iran will affect India adversely;
- (b) If so, the details thereof;
- (c) Whether any invitation has been received by India to mediate in the existing dispute between Iran and the Western countries; and
- (d) If so, the details being worked out for a smooth settlement?

Answer

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

(a) & (b) The differences on the nuclear issue of Iran have led to UN sanctions on Iran. In addition, the US and EU have also imposed unilateral sanctions. Government is studying the impact on India of sanctions against Iran. We continue to maintain that we are bound by UN sanctions and unilateral sanctions imposed by countries or group of countries should not impact on our legitimate trade relations with Iran. Indian companies have faced difficulties in making payments for crude oil and other imports from Iran through international banking channels. India is in discussions with Iran to ensure settlement of payments and uninterrupted supply of crude oil.

(c) & (d) India has not received any invitation to mediate in the existing dispute between Iran and the Western countries.

Source: Lok Sabha (House of the People), Unstarred Question No. 5437 asked by Mr. M.K. Raghavan and Chandrakant Bhaurao Khaire, <http://164.100.47.132/LssNew/psearch/OResult15.aspx?gref=121853>

5. Cut in oil import from Iran, New Delhi, 15 May 2012

Question:

- (a) Whether it is fact that Government has substantially reduced oil import from Iran;
- (b) if so, the details of the oil imported by the public and private sector companies from Iran during the period 2010-11 and 2011-12 and the target fixed for import of oil in the year 2012-13;
- (c) The reasons for reducing the import of oil from Iran; and
- (d) The steps being taken by Government to fill the gap left by above cut in the import of oil?

Answer

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

(a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Total crude oil imported from Iran by Indian companies during the period 2010- 11 and 2011- 12 is 18.50 MMT and 17.44 MMT (provisional) respectively. The target fixed for import of crude oil from Iran for the year 2012-13 is approximately 15.5 MMT subject to techno-commercial and other considerations.

(c) and (d) The quantum of crude oil imported by Indian refineries from various sources is decided by them on the basis of technical, commercial and other considerations. In order to reduce its dependence on any particular region of the world, India has been consciously trying to diversify its sources of crude oil imports to strengthen the country's energy security. Currently, India is importing crude oil from more than 30 countries spread across different continents and there is no shortage or gap envisaged in crude oil procurement by our refineries.

Source: Rajya Sabha (Council of States), Unstarred Question No. 4295 asked by Mr. Dharmendra Pradhan, <http://164.100.47.5/qsearch/QResult.aspx>

6. Export to Iran despite US and Eurozone sanctions, New Delhi, 16 May 2012

Question:

- a) Whether it is a fact that India is continuing to export goods to Iran in spite of US and Euro zone sanctions;
- b) If so, the details thereof and the reasons therefore;
- c) The proposed implications of these sanctions; and
- d) The steps taken by Government to ensure that exporters recover their money from Iran?

Answer:

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

(a) Yes Sir.

(b) India exports goods to Iran in accordance with its international obligations of United Nations sanctions on Iran. Major items of India's export to Iran include agriculture commodities and textiles.

(c) US and Eurozone sanctions on Iran have the potential to disrupt India's trade with Iran.

(d) Rial -Rupee payment arrangements have been put in place for bilateral trade between India and Iran.

Source: Rajya Sabha (Council of States), Unstarred Question No. 4368 asked by Mr. N.K. Singh, <http://164.100.47.5/qsearch/QResult.aspx>

7. Default in payment by Iranian buyers for export of rice, New Delhi, 16 May 2012

Question:

- a) Whether it is a fact that the All India Rice Exporters Association has informed the Government that Iranian buyers have defaulted on payment for about 200,000 tons of rice from their top suppliers in India;
- b) If so, whether they have requested Government to step in; and
- c) If so, what help Government has rendered to the Association?

Answer

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

(a) All India Rice Exporters Association had informed the Government that their members were facing problems in receiving payments for shipments of Rice made to Iran. The overdue amount was reported to be about Rs. 200.00 crores.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) The Embassy of India, Tehran has taken up the matter with the relevant Government authorities in Iran for clearing the payments. As per available information, the defaulters are Iranian private companies and not Government entities.

Source: Rajya Sabha (Council of States), Unstarred Question No. 4341 asked by Mrs. Maya Singh, <http://164.100.47.5/qsearch/QResult.aspx>

8. Electricity import from Iran, New Delhi, 21 May 2012

Question:

- (a) Whether Iran is keen to explore the possibility of exporting electricity to energy starved India and ready to prepare the grounds for development of new energies in co-operation with India;
- (b) If so, the details thereof;
- (c) Whether a new power plant is under construction at Iranian border with new method of transforming natural gas into electricity;
- (d) If so, the details thereof;
- (e) Whether India has also expressed its readiness to import electricity from Iran, as the power transmission is less costly compared to natural gas exports; and
- (f) If so, the details thereof?

Answer:

The Minister of Power (Mr. Sushilkumar Shinde)

(a) & (b) : With a view to synergize India's growing energy requirement with that of abundant energy resources available in Iran, the two Governments discussed the subject of Iran exporting electricity to India. The discussions are at a preliminary stage.

(c) : Construction of any new power plant at Iranian border with new method of transforming natural gas into electricity is not in the knowledge of the Government.

(d) : Does not arise.

(e) & (f) Viability of the proposal on evacuation of electricity to India has not been fully studied.

Source: Rajya Sabha (Council of States), Starred Question No. 637 asked by A. Elavarasan, <http://164.100.47.5/qsearch/QResult.aspx>

9. Visit of Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iran to India, New Delhi, 30 May 2012

H.E. Dr. Ali Akbar Salehi, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran would be visiting India from May 31 – June 1, 2012 as Special Envoy of the President of Iran to hand over an invitation to Prime Minister to attend the 16th NAM Summit to be held in Tehran in August 2012. During his visit, he will call on Prime Minister and meet External Affairs Minister and National Security Adviser.

Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, <http://www.mea.gov.in/mystart.php?id=530219576>

10. Opening Remarks by External Affairs Minister at the Media Interaction with the Foreign Minister of Iran, New Delhi, 31 May 2012

Your Excellency Foreign Minister Dr. Ali Akbar Salehi,

Friends from the media,

I have just had an opportunity to interact with H.E. Dr. Ali Akbar Salehi, the Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Dr Salehi is on his first official visit to India. However, such are our cultural, linguistic and civilizational links that it is a widely held belief amongst us that no Iranian can be a stranger in India just as no Indian can be a stranger in Iran. Our monuments, language, cuisine and literature are all evidence of our rich shared heritage.

As you are aware, Iran is set to assume the chairmanship of the Non-Aligned Movement in August this year. We deeply appreciate the gesture of President Ahmadinejad for deputing His Excellency Dr. Salehi as his Special Envoy to deliver the invitation to Hon'ble Prime Minister of India to attend the sixteenth NAM Summit.

I have congratulated Dr. Salehi on Iran assuming this important responsibility later this year and offered our best wishes for the success of the forthcoming NAM Summit.

India and Iran share the same neighbourhood. Iran is an important neighbour and crucial trade partner for India, and also a major source of our energy supplies. It is also a gateway for India to

Central Asia. India and Iran share an interest in the stability of Central Asia and the Gulf. We also face threats from terrorism and extremism. Dr. Salehi and I have, therefore, taken the opportunity to discuss all these and other issues of our common interest. We intend to continue our discussions over lunch.

Dr. Salehi also has vast experience of nuclear issues. I conveyed my deep appreciation to him for his briefing on the recent discussions between Iran and the P5+1 in Baghdad. India has always held that the nuclear issue should be resolved through peaceful diplomacy and the framework of the IAEA provides the best forum to address the technical aspects of the issue.

Thank you.

Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi,
<http://www.mea.gov.in/mystart.php?id=530119582>

11. Transcript of the Joint Media Interaction of External Affairs Minister of India and Foreign Minister of Iran, New Delhi, 31 May 2012

Official Spokesperson (Mr. Syed Akbaruddin): I welcome you to this media interaction. As is usual we will begin with opening remarks by the two Ministers, following which they have agreed to reply to a few questions. I request Mr. SM Krishna, the External Affairs Minister of India to make his opening remarks.

External Affairs Minister (Mr S.M. Krishna): Your Excellency Foreign Minister Dr. Ali Akbar Salehi, friends from the media:

I have just had an opportunity to interact with His Excellency Dr. Ali Akbar Salehi, the distinguished Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Dr. Salehi is on his first official visit to India. However, such are our cultural, linguistic and civilizational links that it is a widely held belief amongst us that no Iranian can be a stranger in India just as no Indian can be a stranger in Iran. Our monuments, language, cuisine and literature are all evidence of our rich shared heritage.

As you are aware, Iran is set to assume the Chairmanship of the Non-Aligned Movement in August this year. We deeply appreciate the gesture of President Ahmadinejad for deputing His Excellency Dr. Salehi as his Special Envoy to deliver the invitation to Hon. Prime Minister of India to attend the 16th NAM Summit.

I have congratulated Dr. Salehi on Iran assuming this important responsibility later this year, and offered our best wishes for the success of the forthcoming NAM Summit.

India and Iran share the same neighbourhood. Iran is an important neighbour and a crucial trade partner for India, and also a major source of our energy supplies. It is also a gateway for India to Central Asia. India and Iran share an interest in the stability of Central Asia and the Gulf. We

also face threats from terrorism and extremism. Dr. Salehi and I have, therefore, taken the opportunity to discuss all these and other issues of common interest. We intend to continue our discussions over lunch.

Dr. Salehi has also vast experience of nuclear issues. I conveyed my appreciation to him for his briefing on the recent discussions between Iran and the P5+1 in Baghdad. India has always held that the nuclear issue should be resolved through peaceful diplomacy, and the framework of the International Atomic Energy Agency provides the best forum to address the technical aspects of this issue.

Thank you.

Foreign Minister of Iran (Dr. Ali Akbar Salehi): Bismillah ir-Rahman ir-Rahim!

In the name of God, Excellency Mr. Minister my dear friend Mr. Krishna, it is indeed a matter of joy, pride and happiness for me to be in India. I do not feel I am in a strange country: I feel I am in my own country.

As was rightly put by His Excellency the Foreign Minister, and as has been very succinctly and vividly stated by Late Nehru, you can rarely find any two countries in the world that enjoy so much commonality.

India and Iran enjoy a lot of commonalities culturally, linguistically, civilization-wise. And, therefore, the ground for the enhancement of our relationships in all domains is original. We intend, and this is the will of the officials of the two countries. to build a strong foundation on this background.

I am happy to be in India, and I am honoured to deliver the message of our President to His Excellency the Prime Minister of India, inviting him to attend the Non-Aligned Movement Summit which will be held in a few months from now, India being a forerunner and a founder of the Non-Aligned Movement, a movement that probably now has its most important, I would say, presence in offering a platform for most of the developing countries to reflect their views, to demand their rights in the international arena.

The Non-Aligned Movement is the united voice of 120 developing countries that can express themselves in a world where we see a lot of injustice, and we need a voice that would speak for justice, for fairness, and for equal sharing in the management of this world.

So, we discussed with His Excellency a number of issues of mutual interest. We will be continuing discussing the issues of mutual interest.

We decided to hold the 17th Joint Economic Commission soon in Tehran. Our trade with India stands now at about 16 billion dollars, but this is not proportionate to the potential of these two countries.

We are hoping and looking into ways and mechanisms of raising this level of trade between India and Iran. There is so much India can offer to Iran, and Iran I would like to stress here, is a reliable partner of India. It is a reliable source of energy for India. India is an emerging economic power, and its energy demand is ever-increasing. And they should look for resources that are reliable, and Iran is a reliable source for that matter.

Iran will remain a reliable partner for India. We have enjoyed in the past very good relationship. Our relationship now is very good and we hope that we enhance further this bilateral relationship.

Thank you.

Official Spokesperson: The two Ministers have agreed to answer a few questions.

Question (Ms. Devi Rupa, New Indian Express): Sir, the question is to both the Ministers.

The West Asian region has been currently the focus of intense global attention, but now its voice has not been heard so far. Do you think the Movement has any relevance at all? Do you think you can find a common voice on issues like Syria?

Foreign Minister of Iran: As I said, if you go through the history of development of NAM, NAM was developed in the early 60s when we had the two sources of power in the world - the West and the East. And there were countries that would have liked to be independent and not to be part of any of these two superpowers at the time. So, when they got together in Indonesia, they set out ten principles, and those principles still are valid and still are I think of importance. The importance of NAM for especially countries in West Asia, as I said, lies in the fact that it could constitute a proper platform for expressing the joint views of these countries. And it is a platform that also could be utilized, it was only for political purposes that it was introduced, but now it could look into other aspects of inter-relationships between the members of NAM, aspects of economic cooperation, aspects of trade cooperation, scientific cooperation, cultural cooperation. So, NAM I think, if it is given the proper attention and India as I said being one of the founders of NAM, could certainly boost these roles of NAM for the betterment and the enhancement of the prosperity of the people living in the countries that are members of the NAM.

External Affairs Minister: NAM has been a very relevant factor in the context of today's geopolitics. History has shown that Non-Alignment is an idea that evolves over a period of time depending upon the various currents and cross currents on a pan global scale. But, the idea does not fade. India is one of the chief movers and shakers of the Non-Aligned Movement right from

the beginning of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Marshal Tito, and President Sukarno I think today we have gone a long way in strengthening the Non-Aligned Movement.

The world has changed and the challenges have grown more complex. And the systems of global governance whether in the UN or the international financial institutions, have not kept pace either with the growing interdependence of nations or with contemporary realities. Though we have a global economy of sorts, the global polity does not represent the hopes and fears and aspirations of the majority of the people in the world. The relevance of NAM is of greater value today than ever before.

Question (Mr. Ranjit, *Navbharat Times*): My question is addressed to Mr. Krishna. US has imposed unilateral sanctions on Iran. Is India respecting US sanctions by reducing oil imports from Iran?

External Affairs Minister: As regards the question of sanctions is concerned, let me say that the United Nations Security Council in its wisdom has passed Resolutions on the issue, and India has always abided by such Resolutions of the Security Council as a responsible member of the international community. As far as other sanctions, those decided either unilaterally or regionally, we are aware of such measures. In a globalised world such actions tend to impact on the market, and our commercial entities take these into account. Such measures should not impact on legitimate trade interests.

With respect to our energy we are dependent on imports to meet the bulk of our requirement. Given our growing demand, it is natural for us to try and diversify our sources of imports of oil and gas to meet the objective of energy security. In this context, Iran is a key country for our energy needs and it remains an important source of oil for us.

Question (Ms Parul Chandra, *The Asian Age*): My question is for Dr. Salehi.

There was this attack on an Israeli diplomat in New Delhi in February this year, and Israel accused Iran of being behind the attack. I would like to know your reaction to this. And will Iran cooperate with India in the ongoing probe into the attack?

Foreign Minister of Iran: Being a nation with 3000 years of written history, a nation that has introduced civilization into the world, good governance into the world, a nation that continued to produce so many poets, a nation that speaks of ethics and it has based all its life on ethics, we have been accused so many times over so many things. I was just joking with a friend that even the blame for the tsunami in Indonesia may be put on Iran.

It was just a few months ago that there was another blame that Iran was intending to assassinate the Ambassador of Saudi Arabia in Washington. What happened? I would like to ask the press to go and see what happened to this accusation.

So, we totally refute any action of this sort. We at the same time would like to put the record clear when the Israelis themselves, the Zionist regime, they expressed just a few days ago that they are introducing all these what they called these viruses, the computer viruses, into our industry, and they expressed as if it is a matter of pride, and the international community does not react. And when they assassinate our best scientists, our young scientists, they were in just the beginning of their career and having their young children now without fathers, and then they expressed very loudly that they were the ones who assassinated. It is them that the international community have to ask them who is the perpetrator, who is the assassin. They have given assassination a kind of legality when it comes to assassinating the Palestinians.

So, we totally refute the allegation. And the world conscience knows, we do not need to really bother ourselves, the world conscience knows about the Zionist regime and how they do their business in the world. It is themselves that have to be answerable to all kinds of atrocities that have been committed against the Palestinian people.

Official Spokesperson: Thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen; we come to the end of this event.

(Concluded)

Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi,
<http://www.mea.gov.in/mystart.php?id=530319585>

d. Kuwait

12. Tender for cleaning oil spill in Kuwait, New Delhi, 10 May 2012

Question:

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

- (a) Whether the Joint Venture Company of Oil & Natural Gas Corporation, ONGC-Teri Biotech Limited (OTBL) had bid for tenders for cleaning the crude oil spill in Kuwait;
- (b) If so, the names of the companies which had participated in the said tender process along with the name of the company which got the said tender;
- (c) whether one person had submitted two separate bids in the name of two different companies for the said tender and bagged the said tender; and
- (d) If so, whether there has been any violation of rules in this regard?

Answer

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

(a): Oil and Natural Gas Corporation Limited (ONGC) TERI Biotech Ltd.(OTBL) did not bid for the tender for cleaning the crude oil spill in Kuwait.

(b) to (d): Do not arise in view of (a) above.

Source: Lok Sabha (House of the People), Unstarred Question No. 5574 asked by Mr. Kameshwar Baitha, Mrs. Sushila Saroj, Mrs. Usha Verma, Mrs. Seema Upadhyay and Mr. Maheshwar Hazari, <http://164.100.47.132/LssNew/psearch/QResult15.aspx?qref=122374>

13. Visit of Mr. T.K.A Nair to Kuwait, Kuwait, 12 May 2012

His Excellency Mr. T.K.A Nair, Adviser to the Prime Minister of India visited Kuwait from 10-12 May 2012. On May 10, he held meetings with H.E Mr. Mohammad Abdullah Abo Al-Hassan and H.E Dr. Yousef Hamad Al-Ibrahim both Advisers in Al-Diwan Al-Amiri and discussed issues of mutual interest and ways to further promote and strengthen bilateral relations between India and Kuwait.

At a reception hosted in his honour on May 10 by the Ambassador of India, H.E Mr. Satish C. Mehta, he interacted with a cross-section of Indian community members. During this event, he also presented a lapel pin as part of the Pravasi Bharatiya Samman to Dr. Mariam Chisti, who was awarded the Pravasi Bharatiya Samman in 2004.

During his visit to Kuwait H.E Mr. T.K.A Nair also participated in events hosted by Indian Business Council, Indian Doctors' Forum, National Forum, Kuwait and Indian Community School, Kuwait.

Source: Embassy of India, Kuwait, <http://www.indembkwt.org/ShowNews.aspx?ID=43&SECTION=1>

14. Indian Embassy extends Open house to all Wednesdays, Kuwait, 31 May 2012

The Open House for the Indian citizen by the Ambassador which is being held every alternate Wednesday has been found useful by the Indian Community and the Embassy. It will now be held on every Wednesday from June 2012 between 1500 hrs and 1600 hrs. in the Embassy. During the month of June, 2012 the dates for the open house fall on 6th, 13th, 20th, and 27th of the month. In case Wednesday is an Embassy holiday, the meeting will be held on the next working day.

To ensure timely action/follow-up by the Embassy, it is requested that, wherever possible, Indian citizens should exhaust the existing channels of interaction/ grievance redressal and bring their problems/issues in writing with supporting documents.

It may be mentioned that Embassy of India's Consular Wing is providing daily service of Open House to Indian citizens on all working days from 1000 hrs to 1100 hrs and from 1430 hrs to 1530 hrs by the Consular Officer in the Meeting Room of the Consular Hall. For any unaddressed issues, Second Secretary (Consular) could be contacted. Furthermore, the head of the Consular Wing is also available to redress grievances.

Similarly, a labour wing Help Desk functions from 0830 hrs to 1300 hrs and 1400 hrs to 1630 hrs in the Labour Hall to address the labour related issues. There is also a 24X7 Help Line (Tel

No. 25674163) to assist labours in distress. For any unaddressed issues, the concerned Attachés in the labour section and the head of the labour wing could be contacted.

Source: Embassy of India, Kuwait,

<http://www.indembkwt.org/ShowNews.aspx?ID=51&SECTION=1>

e. Oman

15. Review of gas pricing by Oman Oil Company, New Delhi, 4 May 2012

Question:

- (a) Whether there is any Gas Supply Agreement (GSA) between Oman India Fertilizer Company and Oman Oil Company;
- (b) If so, the price of Natural Gas supplied by Oman Oil Company in dollar / mbtu and duration of the Gas Supply Agreement;
- (c) Whether there is a request for premature review of gas pricing by OOC; and
- (d) If so, Government's reaction thereto?

Answer

Minister of State (Independent Charge) in the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation and Minister of State in the Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers (Mr. Srikant Kumar Jena)

(a) & (b): The Gas Supply Agreement (GSA) was signed between OMIFCO and the Oman Oil Company (OOC) of Sultanate of Oman on the 29th May 2002 for long term Gas supply to OMIFCO. The tenure of GSA between OMIFCO and OOC is for a period of 15 years from the start of commercial production by OMIFCO i.e. from January 2006 to the year 2020. As per the agreement, the price of the Gas was fixed @ US Dollar .77 per mmbtu for a period of 10 years from the start of commercial production by OMIFCO i.e. from January 2006 to December 2015. For supply of Gas after 2015 the price of the Gas is to be increase as per the formula given under Scheduled-3 of GSA.

(c): Yes, Sir.

(d): The impact of increase in Gas Price and consequent revision in Urea off-take price as requested by OMIFCO/OOC has been placed before the Cabinet, who considered this on 26th April, 2012 and approved the revision in Gas Price and Urea off-take price subject to certain stipulations.

Source: Rajya Sabha (Council of States), Unstarred Question No. 3152 asked by Mr. Prasanta Chatterjee, <http://164.100.47.5/qsearch/QResult.aspx>

16. Pricing of natural gas imported from Oman, New Delhi, 22 May 2012

Question:

- (a) Whether the Ministry is aware that Oman Oil Company was supplying natural gas to Oman India Fertilizer Company which has KRIBHCO and IFFCO as partners at a price of 0.77 dollar/mmbtu from 2005, till date;
- (b) Whether the same is being increased by 0.5 dollar/mmbtu every year up to 3 dollar/mmbtu maximum;
- (c) If so, the reasons for the same being priced in the range of 4 to 5 dollars/mmbtu by domestic oil producers in India;
- (d) Whether any efforts are being made to assess/standardize actual cost of production in Indian oil/gas fields; and
- (e) If not, the reasons therefore?

Answer

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

(a) & (b): Department of Fertilizers has stated that Oman Oil Company was supplying natural gas to Oman India Fertilizer Company (OMIFCO) at a price of 0.77 dollar/mmbtu and it has agreed for revision in the import prices of Urea being supplied by OMIFCO to the Govt. of India as a consequence of the increase in the prices of gas as proposed by Oman Oil Company for supply to OMIFCO.

(c): At present, there are broadly two pricing regimes for gas in the country - gas priced under Administered Pricing Mechanism (APM) and non-APM/free market gas. The price of APM gas is set by the Government. As regards non-APM/free market gas, this could also be broadly divided into two categories, namely, (i) imported Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG), and (ii) domestically produced gas from New Exploration Licensing Policy (NELP) and pre-NELP fields. While the price of LNG imported under term contracts is governed by the Sale & Purchase Agreement (SPA) between the LNG seller and the buyer, the spot cargoes are purchased on mutually agreeable commercial terms. As regards NELP & pre-NELP gas, its pricing is governed in terms of the Production Sharing Contract (PSC) signed between the Government & the Contractor.

(d) & (e): No Sir, Average cost of crude oil & natural gas production varies from company to company depending upon size/type of the reservoir, location of reservoir, operating cost, financing cost, depreciation, depletion & amortization applicable and accounting policy followed by various Exploration & Production (E & P) companies as well as taxes and duties levied by the Government.

Source: Rajya Sabha (Council of States), Unstarred Question No. 5082 asked by Mr. Tapan Kumar Sen, <http://164.100.47.5/qsearch/QResult.aspx>

f. Qatar

17. Cooperation in Oil Exploration with Qatar, 3 May 2012

Question:

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

- (a) Whether the Government proposes to enhance co-operation in the key sector of oil and gas exploration with Qatar;
- (b) If so, whether the Government has signed any agreement with Qatar in this regard along with the details thereof;
- (c) The details of the quantity of oil and gas imported from Qatar during each of the last three years; and
- (d) The extent to which imports will increase after the aforesaid agreement?

Answer

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

(a) & (b). Qatar is India's largest supplier of LNG and a key supplier of crude oil. Recently, during the state visit of Emir of Qatar, His Highness Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al-Thani to New-Delhi during 8th -10th April 2012, the Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Qatar's Ministry of Energy & Industry on co-operation in the field of Oil & Gas.

(c) . Details of oil imported from Qatar during the last 3 years are as follows:

Crude oil (MMTPA)		
2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
5.41	5.61	6.41

Details of LNG imported from Qatar by Petronet LNG limited during the last 3 years are as follows:

LNG (MMTPA)		
2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
6.18	7.71	8.38

(d). The increase in import of oil & gas from Qatar will depend on domestic demand in India as well as the price at which LNG is sold by Qatar. GAIL and PLL are in discussion with RasGas, Qatar to secure an additional 3 MMTPA LNG from Qatar but the deal is subject to suitable price being offered by Qatar.

Source: Lok Sabha (House of the People), Unstarred Question No. 4485 asked by Mr. Shivaji Adhalrao Patil, Mr. Anandrao Vithoba Adsul, Mr. Dharmendra Yadav, Mr. Babar Gajanan Dharmshi and Mr. P. Kumar,

<http://164.100.47.132/LssNew/psearch/QResult15.aspx?qref=121471>

18. Talks with Qatar, New Delhi, 9 May 2012

Question:

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

- (a) Whether the Prime Minister has held talks with the heads of Qatar recently in Delhi; and
- (b) If so, the details thereof and the outcome thereof?

Answer

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

(a) Yes.

(b) His Highness Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani, the Emir of Qatar paid a state visit to India from April 8-10, 2012. Delegation level talks co-chaired by Hon'ble Prime Minister and HH the Emir of Qatar were held on April 09, 2012. The meeting discussed issues of mutual interest and reviewed bilateral relations and utilization of existing bilateral institutional mechanisms in various sectors to further strengthen them especially in the sectors of Hydrocarbons, Infra-structure, Investments, Education, Culture, Science & Technology, Civil Aviation and Welfare of the Indian Community. Six Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs)/Agreements were signed after the bilateral talks viz,

i) MOU on Cooperation in Oil & Gas

ii) Agreement on Cooperation in the field of Legal Affairs

iii) Exchange programme on Cooperation in the Field of Education

iv) Agreement in the Field of Cultural Cooperation

v) MOU between Reserve Bank of India and Qatar Central Bank

vi) MOU between India Trade Promotion Organization and Qatar Tourism Authority on Cooperation in the field of organizing Exhibitions.

Source: Lok Sabha (House of the People), Unstarred Question No. 5307 asked by Mr. Rajaiah Siricilla and Mr. Prabhakar Ponnam,

<http://164.100.47.132/LssNew/psearch/QResult15.aspx?qref=121831>

19. Mr. Sanjiv Arora, appointed as the next Ambassador of India to Qatar, New Delhi, 25 May 2012

Mr. Sanjiv Arora, presently Consul General in CGI Houston has been appointed as the next Ambassador of India to the State of Qatar.

He is expected to take up his assignment shortly.

Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi,
<http://www.mea.gov.in/mystart.php?id=530219570>

g. Saudi Arabia

20. Indian nationals under Saudi Arabia custody, New Delhi, 2 May 2012

Question:

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

- (a) The number of Indian nationals held hostage in the Arab countries including Saudi Arabia;
- (b) Whether it is a fact that the Indian nationals emigrating to the Arab countries in search of better opportunities are treated as slaves by the companies over there;
- (c) If so, whether the Government has taken up this issue with the respective Governments; and
- (d) If so, the number of Indian nationals residing over there at present even after the expiry of their visa period?

Answer

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

- (a) Nil, as far as the Government is aware, barring those held by pirates in Somalia.
- (b) & (c) No. Government of India does not receive complaints regarding Indian Nationals emigrating to the Arab countries in search of better opportunities being taken hostages or treated like slaves by the authorities concerned/companies. However our Missions and Posts in the Arab region do receive complaints of other nature. Whenever such complaints are received, Missions/Posts immediately take up the issues with the concerned employers and/or local authorities with a view to arrive at an expeditious and amicable settlement. Government of India, through its Missions/ Posts in the Arab countries, has taken several measures and initiatives to protect the rights of Indian workers.
- (d) The number of Indian nationals residing in the Arab countries after expiry of their visa period in not available with Government of India.

Source: Lok Sabha (House of the People), Unstarred Question No. 4276 asked by Mr. Nikhil Kumar Choudhary, <http://164.100.47.132/LssNew/psearch/QResult15.aspx?qref=120734>

21. Press Release, Riyadh, 5 May 2012

A team of consular officials of Embassy of India, Riyadh, will visit Dammam from May 9-11, 2012 to provide welfare and consular assistance to Indian nationals at Dammam Deportation Centre with a view to facilitate issue emergency certificates to them for their departure to India. On Wednesday, the team will visit the Dammam Deportation Centre and on Thursday and

Friday, the consular official will provide attestation service at VFS's Passport Application Centre at Dammam.

Source: Embassy of India, Riyadh,

<http://www.indianembassy.org.sa/Content.aspx?ID=790&PID=691>

22. Press Release, Riyadh, 6 May 2012

The Embassy of India in Riyadh is organizing a Cultural Evening of "Shamm-e- *hazal*" by Ghazal Maestro Talat Aziz and his troupe from India at the International Indian School (Boys Wing) Auditorium, Rwadha-2 at 8.00 p.m. on 15th May 2012 (Tuesday).

The programme is for Indian nationals and invitation cards are available at the Embassy, free of charge. Those interested should fax their requests with names and valid Iqama copies along with their contact numbers (Mobile/Tel) to the Embassy Fax No: - 01-4827019/4816318 or e-mail at cul.riyadh@mea.gov.in. The invitation cards will be issued on "First Come First Served" basis. Children below 12 years are not allowed. A maximum of four persons per application will be entertained. The last date for receipt of requests is 9th May (Wednesday) 2012. The list of invitees will be displayed on the Embassy website: - www.indianembassy.org.sa on 12th May (Saturday) 2012. The invitees may collect their passes from the Embassy on 13th May 2012 (Sunday) (from 10.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m.) giving their serial number mentioned in the list and showing the Iqama copies.

About TALAT AZIZ

Born in Hyderabad, India to Abdul Azeem Khan and Sajida Abid, a famous Urdu writer and poet. He went to Hyderabad Public School till the 12th standard when he finished his ISC and then joined The Indian Institute of Management and Commerce for his B.Com (Hons) Course. His family loved fine arts and used to organize Mehfil in their house, inviting artists and poets like Jagjit Singh, Jan Nisaar Akhtar the father of the famous writer Javed Akhtar to name a few. This greatly influenced him and started learning music from an early age.

Talat Aziz took his initial training in music from Kirana Gharana. He was trained primarily by Ustad Samad Khan and later by Ustad Fayaz Ahmed who were famous classical music singers. After the initial training, Talat decided to learn music from music maestro Mehdi Hassan. On many occasions, like on a concert tour of the US and Canada in 1986 he shared the same stage with him on concerts in India and abroad.

His first major performance was in Hyderabad at a place called King Kothi. He sang before a crowd of over 5,000. He sung Kaise Sukoon Paoon and some ghazals by noted shaayars of Hyderabad. Though he was nervous at his first performance in front of audience yet he performed well.

After his graduation he moved to Bombay in 1976 on a suggestion from Jagjit Singh. He also trained under classical music Ustad Samaad Khan and Faiyaz Ahmed Khan. And for his ghazal training he became a disciple of Mehdi Hassan in 1978. With the help of Jagjit he released his first album in 1979, Jagjit Singh Presents Talat Aziz. But for several years he was to struggle for a living. Talat also sang some ghazals in films like Umrao Jaan and Bazaar, which were super-hit.

Talat has also composed music for TV serials and has also acted in several of them. He composed music for teleserials to name a few like Dewar, Baaz, Adhikaar, Ghutan, Sailaab, Aashirwaad and the magnum opus, Noorjehan. His acting was appreciated in serials like Sahil, Manzil, , Dil Apna Aur Preet Parayee and Noorjehan a TV serial written by Nida Fazli. Talat released many albums like Jagjit Singh presents Talat Aziz, Talat Aziz live, Images A team Come True Lehren, Ehsaas, Suroor, Saughaat, Tasavvur, Manzil, Storms, Dhadkan, Shahkaar, Mehboob, Khubsoorat, Irshaad, Khushnuma, to name a few with his latest offering in 2009 Caravan e Ghazal in which Sonu Niigaam also participated in a duet 'Qurbaton mein bhi' a ghazal written by Ahmed Faraaz.

The singer was the ghazal artiste to release a ghazal music video of Tasavvur, in 1987 when a video album was not even thought of .He is often seen on the small screen in various roles as a music judge. However, his fans would love to see him on the silver screen too. He worked in a film in 1990. It was Mahesh Bhatt's `Dhun' opposite Sangeeta Bijlani. The film never got released for various reasons but the music was released by HMV in 1991 and was a great hit of that time featuring tracks like ' Main Aatma tu Parmaatma' a bhajan sung as a duet with none another than Mehdi Hassan and Talat and other tracks like 'Yaad aane waale' Laagi prem dhun laagi' which became a rage with the young crowd.

The advent of the ghazal as a popular genre began in the late seventies and became a rage in the 80" when artists like Talat Aziz used to sell out albums in the hundreds of thousands of units. Begum Akhtar had her following of ghazal lovers. Then came Mehdi Hassan's , Ghulam Ali who was equally well known. On this side of the border, the Indian couple Jagjit and Chitra Singh, the ghazal exponents did live shows and sang at private mehfiles. During that period Sanjeev Kohli, son of Madan Mohan, discovered a singer called Talat Aziz , who was young, good-looking, malleable and above all, he had a good voice. Jagjit Singh had already heard Talat sing at a Mehfil in Hyderabad, so he agreed to compose his first album. In 1979 his first album titled "Jagjit Singh presents Talat Aziz" came out which was phenomenal success thus gave him a launch pad for his meteoric rise. Then came the classic ghazal ' zindagi jab bhi teri bazm mein " from Umrao Jaan composed by Khayyam the ghazal from Bazaar ' Phir chidi raat baat phoolon ki' a duet with none other than the legend Lata Mangeshkar and the iconic nazm 'Aaina mujh se meri' from Mahesh Bhatt's film Daddy. The rest is history Talat Aziz has been singing in concerts for over three decades and has travelled the globe with his sell out performances. He

completed his 25 Years Silver Anniversary with the launch of a special audio and video album in 2004 at the NCPA Mumbai where the veritable who's who of the music industry were present and the ones like Mehdi Hasan and Lata Mangeshkar who could not make it sent in their messages on video and a special documentary on his life was screened.

Source: Embassy of India, Riyadh,
<http://www.indianembassy.org.sa/downloads/Talat%20Aziz.pdf>

23. Open House for the community members at the Embassy of India, Riyadh on Thursday 17th May, 2012 from 0900 hrs to 1200 hrs, Riyadh, 12 May 2012

The Embassy of India Riyadh would be holding next Open House for Indian citizens to address their problems\grievances on Thursday, May 17, 2012 in the Embassy premises from 0900 hrs to 1200 hrs.

During the Open House, members of the community can meet His Excellency Mr. Hamid Ali Rao Ambassador of India to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and other officers of the Embassy to discuss their consular, labour-welfare and any other issues.

All interested members of the community are invited to attend the Open House.

Source: Embassy of India, Riyadh,
<http://www.indianembassy.org.sa/downloads/open%20house.pdf>

24. Visit of Minister of State for External Affairs, H.E. Mr. E. Ahamed, Riyadh, 26 May 2012

Hon'ble Minister of State for External Affairs, H.E. Mr. E. Ahamed together with a 3 member delegation visited Saudi Arabia from 22-26 May 2012 to participate in the Ministerial Meeting of Friends of Yemen in Riyadh on 23 May 2012. He held bilateral meetings with the Hon'ble Prime Minister of Yemen, Mohammad Bsindawa and Foreign Minister of Yemen, Mr. Abu Bakr Al Qirbi on the sidelines of the Yemen ministerial meeting on 23 May 2012.

On bilateral front, he met HRH Prince Saud Al Faisal, Saudi Foreign Minister, HRH Prince Salman bin Abdul-Aziz, Defence Minister, H.E. Dr. Fouad bin Abdulsalam Al-Farsi, Hajj Minister and HRH Prince Abdul-Aziz bin Majed bin Abdul-Aziz, Governor of Medina. During these meetings, bilateral and regional issues of mutual interests were discussed.

A reception in honour of the Hon'ble MOS was organized by the [chargé d'affaires] Mr. Manohar Ram at the Embassy to enable him to meet the community members.

Source: Embassy of India, Riyadh,
<http://www.indianembassy.org.sa/downloads/open%20house.pdf>

25. India - The Incredible Investment Destination, Riyadh, 26 May 2012

Government of India in conjunction with Deutsche Bank is holding the 'India: The Incredible Investment Destination' Conference in Riyadh on Sunday, 10th June, 2012 at 'Al Faisaliah Hotel, Riyadh.

India is the second fastest growing economy in the world. Opportunities abound in the country for foreign investors to gainfully participate in India's multidimensional growth. Government of India has recently ushered in several changes to make the investment climate in the country conducive to such productive participation. Some of the changes include the introduction of new avenues for direct investment by Qualified Foreign Investors (QFI) in India's vibrant, robust and high return capital market. Liberalized policies have also made investment in the country's infrastructure sector very attractive and rewarding.

The composite delegation would be led by Mr. R. Gopalan, Secretary, Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance, Senior representatives from the Ministry of Finance, Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), Reserve Bank of India (RBI), Department of Revenue (Tax authorities) and Department of Disinvestment will also be a part of the delegation.

The Conference presents a unique and invaluable opportunity to investors seeking higher returns to directly interact with key Government and regulatory officials, who will address the meeting and interact with the attendees.

Source: Embassy of India, Riyadh,

<http://www.indianembassy.org.sa/downloads/open%20house.pdf>

26. Saudi Arabia Keen to Get Indian Pharmaceutical Products

Saudi Parliamentary Delegation Meets Mr. Ghulam Nabi Azad, New Delhi, 9 May 2012

A Parliamentary delegation led by Dr. Abdullah Bin Mohammed bin Ibrahim Al Al-Sheikh, Speaker of Majlis Ash Shura (Consultative Council) of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia called upon the Union Health and Family Welfare Minister Mr. Ghulam Nabi Azad in New Delhi today. The delegation is on a three day official visit to India. Mr. Azad recalled the close relations reflecting centuries old economic and socio-cultural ties between India and Saudi Arabia. There has been an upsurge in Indian investments in the Kingdom, especially after the signing of the Bilateral Investment Protection Agreement during the earlier visit of King Abdullah to India in January 2006. The signing of Riyadh declaration also during Feb 2010 visit of Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh further laid the groundwork for new era of strategic partnership between the two countries. Shri Azad also recalled his recent visit to Riyadh where he represented India at the funeral ceremony of the Late Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, Sultan bin Abdul Aziz.

Talking of issues pertaining to health sector, Mr. Azad shared the Indian experience in the areas of Innovations in health care service delivery; Interventions in making health care accessible and equitable and our strength in producing good quality generic drugs at affordable prices. Mr. Azad noted that about two million Indians in Saudi Arabia account for the largest expatriate community in the country. There are a huge number of Indian doctors and nurses there too. The Minister suggested that India could help Saudi Arabia with knowhow of setting up medical colleges as also with medicine supplies. Shri Azad informed that India is the 4th largest producer of pharmaceuticals in the world in terms of volume and 13th largest in terms of value. Indian

pharmaceutical products are exported to about 211 countries around the world. Indian pharmaceutical products have been acknowledged at many a UN forum for their good quality, safety and efficacy, he added. He stated that Indian generic drugs have helped bring down the cost of immunization and treatment of various diseases worldwide. Mr. Azad particularly appreciated the excellent arrangements put in place by Government of Saudi Arabia for the comfort of Hajj pilgrims.

The leader of the delegation Dr. Abdullah Bin Mohammed bin Ibrahim Al Al-Sheikh appreciated the hospitality extended by Mr. Azad and said that they would especially welcome help from India for transfer of medical technology and also help with medical education as India possesses the technical capacity. He said bilateral visits not only help enhance understanding between the two countries but also help highlight areas of possible cooperation. The delegation informed that currently Kingdom of Saudi Arabia imports about five billion dollar worth of pharmaceuticals. Considering Indian pharma companies are among the world leaders, Dr. Abdullah Bin Mohammed bin Ibrahim said they would be keen to extend the incentives given by their government to Indian pharma industry to set up base in Saudi Arabia with the objective of producing affordable medicines to meet local and regional needs.

Source: Press Information Bureau, New Delhi,

<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx?relid=83385>

h. Syria

27. Travel Advisory on Syria, Damascus, 30 May 2012

In a tragic incident on May 26, 2012, two Indian pilgrims died in a bomb blast in Iraq when they were travelling by road from Syria to Iraq.

The Embassy has contacted religious leaders in Syria who facilitate visit of Indian pilgrims and has advised them on the precautions to be taken to ensure the safety and security of the Indian pilgrims visiting Syria, in view of the current security situation. Syrian tour operators who organize conducted tours for Indian pilgrims have been requested to ensure that Indian pilgrims planning to visit Syria are kept up-to-date about the security situation. The operators have been asked not to send pilgrims by road, but to advise them to travel by air only when they travel to Iraq from Syria.

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

Source: Embassy of India, Damascus,

<http://www.indianembassyin-syria.com/english/links/press-releases.html>

i. Tunisia

28. Mrs. Nagma Mohamed Mallick, appointed as the next Ambassador of India to Tunisia, New Delhi, 15 May 2012

Mrs. Nagma Mohamed Mallick (IFS: 1991) presently Deputy Chief of Mission in Embassy of India, Bangkok, has been appointed as the next Ambassador of India to Republic of Tunisia.

She is expected to take up her assignment shortly.

Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi,
<http://www.mea.gov.in/mystart.php?id=530219402>

j. United Arab Emirates

29. Visit of Foreign Minister of UAE to New Delhi, New Delhi, 16 May 2012

Minister of Foreign Affairs of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) His Highness Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan will pay an official visit to New Delhi on 17-18 May 2012.

India enjoys close and multifaceted relations with UAE. During the last three years, the two countries were each other's largest trading partners. Our bilateral trade during 2011-12 was US\$ 67 billion. UAE contributes significantly to India's energy security. UAE hosts an Indian community of 1.75 million, the largest expatriate community in the country.

Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi,
<http://www.mea.gov.in/mystart.php?id=530219404>

30. Open Day for Indian Expat, Abu Dhabi, 16 May 2012

The Embassy of India, Abu Dhabi, in an attempt to address grievances of the local Indian community regarding consular, community and other matters, has decided to hold "Open Day" at Embassy and Consulate General of India, Dubai. The Open Day at Embassy will be held on June 03, 2012 (Sunday) from 1500-1600 hrs and at CGI Dubai on June 03, 2012 (Sunday) from 1000-1100hrs. Any Indian national, desirous to meet the Ambassador / Consul General regarding his grievance can do so without prior appointment during the respective Open Day.

Source: Embassy of India, Abu Dhabi,
<http://www.indembassyuae.org/drupal/node/772>

31. Opening remarks by External Affairs Minister at the Joint Press Interaction with the Foreign Minister of United Arab Emirates, New Delhi, 18 May 2012

His Highness, Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Foreign Minister of the United Arab Emirates,

Friends from Media

This is for the third time His Highness, Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Foreign Minister of the United Arab Emirates are meeting in less than a year. It is an indication of the priority that each of us accords to our bilateral relations.

Today we focused particularly on our economic ties. We discussed the forthcoming 3rd India-Arab Economic Conclave to be hosted in Abu Dhabi on 21-22 May 2012 and the proposed Road Show on investment in Abu Dhabi and Dubai that Indian officials intend to undertake in June so as to exchange information and clarify issues related to the investment climate in India.

The United Arab Emirates is our largest trading partner, significant contributor to our energy security and hosts about 1.75 million Indian expatriates.

The United Arab Emirates' leadership is now keen to address the issue of investments to bring it on par with the multi-faceted relations we enjoy in all other sectors. I am happy to inform you that the two Governments have decided to set up a High Level Joint Task Force to explore further opportunities in investments.

His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Zayed al Nahyan, the Managing Director of the Abu Dhabi Investment Authority and our Commerce, Industries and Textiles Minister Shri Anand Sharma will be leading the respective sides of the High Level Task Force.

Our bilateral relations have now acquired a new momentum and are progressing towards a comprehensive partnership for the mutual benefit of our countries.

Thank You.

Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi,

<http://www.mea.gov.in/mystart.php?id=530119437>

32. Transcript of the Joint Media Interaction by External Affairs Minister and Foreign Minister of United Arab Emirates, New Delhi, 18 May 2012

External Affairs Minister (Mr. S.M. Krishna): His Highness, Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Foreign Minister of the United Arab Emirates; friends from media:

This is for the third time His Highness, Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Foreign Minister of the United Arab Emirates and I are meeting in less than a year. It is an indication of the priority that each of us accords to our bilateral relations.

Today we focused particularly on our economic ties. We discussed the forthcoming 3rd India-Arab Economic Conclave to be hosted in Abu Dhabi on 21st and 22nd May 2012 and the proposed Road Show on investment in Abu Dhabi and Dubai that Indian officials intend to undertake in June so as to exchange information and clarify issues related to the investment climate in India.

The United Arab Emirates is our largest trading partner, significant contributor to our energy security, and hosts about 1.75 million Indian expatriates.

The United Arab Emirates' leadership is now keen to address the issue of investments to bring it on par with the multi-faceted relations we enjoy in all other sectors. I am happy to inform you

that the two Governments have decided to set up a High Level Joint Task Force to explore further opportunities in the area of investments.

His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Zayed al Nahyan, the Managing Director of the Abu Dhabi Investment Authority, and our Commerce, Industries and Textiles Minister Mr. Anand Sharma will be leading the respective sides of the High Level Task Force.

Our bilateral relations have now acquired a new momentum and are progressing towards a comprehensive partnership for the mutual benefit of our countries.

Thank you.

Official Spokesperson (Mr. Syed Akbaruddin): I now request His Excellency the Foreign Minister of the UAE to make his opening remarks.

Foreign Minister of UAE (Mr. Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan): Good afternoon.

Dear friend, dear colleague Mr. Krishna, I am very honoured to be back here in Delhi and visiting India. The relationship between our two countries prolongs for a period prior to the existence of our two nations as we know them now. The people-to-people relations between our two countries have been there for centuries, and we are very eager that we can even further facilitate this relationship in all means and forms.

It is extremely important to see the frequent flights between our two countries. The trade is extending to 50 billion dollars this year. The UAE is the fourth largest supplier of crude oil to India. We have almost two million Indians visiting and living in the UAE. We are very proud of that. I think there is a lot we could do. I am very delighted that both our Governments have reached an agreement on having a Joint Investment Task Force with very senior officials on both sides. We are working together not only in developing our investments in India but in looking at future investments in India.

India is not only a very important ally and a neighbour to the UAE but it is a booming economy worldwide. There is potential of one trillion dollar of investment in India in the next five years. India is looking for half of that amount to come from abroad. We would very much like to see a strong UAE presence in that.

Minister, you visited the UAE on the 16th of April. We had a very good visit. You rightly mentioned that this is our third meeting in the last year. It is extremely important that we keep in touch on bilateral relationship between our two countries but also in exchanging our views in a very dynamic region that both of us live in.

I am sure we will have even more time during lunch to discuss developments in the peace process between Israel and Palestine, discuss the Iran nuclear file, discuss the security in the

Arabian Gulf, discuss the very vibrant and developing relationship in the last couple of months which we are very much pleased about between Pakistan and India, discuss the future of Afghanistan.

We will also have the opportunity to talk about the importance of securing maritime access in the Gulf of Aden, stabilizing and supporting the Government in Somalia. So, there is a huge agenda in front of us both on investment, trade but also on security and political matters.

Your Excellency, once again thank you very much for your kind words, and thank you very much for your robust support for the relationship between our two countries. I really hope that we could meet again soon and report to the media even further developments in the relationship.

Official Spokesperson: The two Ministers have agreed to take a few questions.

Question (Mr. N.C. Bipindra, IANS): This question is to the Indian External Affairs Minister.

There have been plans of increasing oil imports from the UAE. Have you discussed this issue with your counterpart? What was the result of it?

External Affairs Minister: India's economy is one of the fastest growing economies in the world. As a result of that, the need for increased import of oil and other energy sources is of extreme critical importance to us. And in the United Arab Emirates we have a dependable supplier of oil which India needs so badly.

In 2010, we imported 12 million tons, and in 2011 we increased it to 14 million tons. So, this should be the indication of the rate at which our imports from the UAE are going up. It is basically our refineries which make decisions on import of oil, and they are based on technical, economical and commercial considerations. Given the United Arab Emirates' advantages on all these fronts, it is likely that this trend of the UAE continuing to meet our needs of energy security will be maintained.

We also discussed the possibilities of cooperating not only on increase in oil imports but also investment opportunities in this sector. The Task Force on Investments, we will certainly look into this matter also.

Question (Ms. Shohrat Aref, MENA): The UAE is an important source of energy to India. Do you intend to increase your exports to India in the coming period?

Foreign Minister of UAE: As you know, the UAE is a large exporter of crude oil, and we keep on trying to improve our capacity when it comes to production and export. Looking at many of our strategic plans, we do not only try to increase our exports but also to diversify our own ways where we use our own resources. That is why we invest very heavily in renewable energies; we are trying to invest in nuclear energy so we can offset further our capacity to the world market.

No doubt, we would like to see more UAE energy exports to India, especially when it comes to crude oil. I believe as we speak, there are talks between our officials and they are looking at these venues. But even further, as Mr. Krishna rightly mentioned, we would like to see a UAE presence in downstream investments in India when it comes to petrochemical, energy production, etc. It is not only a step that we would like to take today but there are several steps down the road that we would like to develop among our two countries.

Question (Mr. Ashok Sharma): Given the existing cooperation between the two countries, I would like to ask the two Ministers, is there any possibility of jointly tackling the maritime pirates in a very specific manner?

External Affairs Minister: We attach great importance to working with all other countries including the United Arab Emirates to counter the scourge of piracy on the high seas. When I visited Abu Dhabi last month, we had very extensive discussions on this issue. Both of us have agreed that our officials will work together and cooperate on tackling this menace collectively. We intend to share our knowledge, our intelligence, and cooperate effectively on this issue with the United Arab Emirates so that we as a group could tackle this scourge.

Foreign Minister of UAE: Resolving piracy will not come unless we can resolve Somalia. It is very important that at a time when we face piracy in the Gulf of Aden and beyond actually, which I am very much pleased that the UAE and India are working very closely on, its key where we can resolve the source of this problem which is the lack of government, of unity, of the void that has been created in Somalia. We are working very closely with the Central Government in Mogadishu but also with the local governments in Somalia where we could further not only help and support but try to get them together, and beyond by engaging with the African Union, in helping Somalia, in supporting many of their difficulties let alone poverty and drought. But beyond that, where we can help them building their capacity in every way and form. That is the only way where we can make sure that the source of piracy is resolved. And here also the help and the cooperation between our two countries to Somalia and to the African Union is vital and key.

Question (Ms. Geeta Mohan, Times Now): My question is to the External Affairs Minister of India. It is on a very different issue, Sir.

Over a thousand of Indians are stranded in Angola. What has the Government been doing on this entire matter? Also, what is the message on the police brutality against the Indians in Angola when the Ambassador met with the Secretary (West) in the Ministry of External Affairs yesterday?

External Affairs Minister: I am personally following issues related to the problems that the Indian workers unfortunately are facing in Angola. It is engaging our most serious attention. I am sure that all efforts will be made to ensure a swift resolution of the issues involved. And those

workers who want to come back to India I think that could be arranged swiftly and without any difficulty. We have done it before elsewhere, and we are willing to do it here in Angola. About their financial transactions, and their compensation and whatever it is, I think we will be taking it up with the company concerned, the employer. And I hope that we should be able to resolve the issue.

Official Spokesperson: With that, we come to the end of this event.

Thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen.

(Concluded)

Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi,

<http://www.mea.gov.in/mystart.php?id=530319440>

Specific Issues

k. Hajj Issue

33. Facilities to Hajj Pilgrims, New Delhi, 2 May 2012

Question:

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

- (a) The facilities being provided by the Union Government to the Hajj pilgrims;
- (b) Whether the State Governments also make a contribution therein; and
- (c) If so, the details thereof?

Answer

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

(a) Government of India assists the Hajj pilgrims in coordination with the Hajj Committee of India through-

(i) Provision of accommodation and other logistical support at Mecca, Medina and Jeddah,

(ii) Deputation of Doctors and paramedics, Coordinators, Assistant Hajj Officers, Hajj Assistants and Khadim-ul-Hujjaj to assist Hajjis during Hajj,

(iii) Setting up Hospitals, dispensaries and ambulances and supply of medicines to Hajjis in Mecca and Medina,

(iv) Facilitating Air travel from 21 embarkation points in India to Jeddah and back,

(v) The arrangements are reviewed at the Annual Hajj Review Meeting and remedial action is taken on the basis of feedback received.

(a)& (c) State Governments through the State Hajj Committees, make arrangements of training camps, mandatory inoculation of polio and meningitis and transit accommodation at all embarkation points in India prior to departure of the pilgrims.

Source: Lok Sabha (House of the People), Unstarred Question No. 4243 asked by Mr. Ravindra Kumar Pandey,

<http://164.100.47.132/LssNew/psearch/QResult15.aspx?qref=120722>

34. Hajj Pilgrimage on International Passports, New Delhi, 2 May 2012

Question:

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

- (a) Whether only international passport will be valid for Hajj pilgrimage;
- (b) If so, the steps taken by the Government to get the passports of Hajj pilgrims made urgently for the Hajj pilgrimage-2012;
- (c) Whether due to certain reasons, the issuance of passports has been a complicated and time-taking process in the regional passport offices;
- (d) If so, whether the Government proposes to make special arrangements for preparation of passports of Hajj pilgrims on priority basis;
- (e) If so, the details thereof; and
- (f) The other steps taken/being taken by the Government in this regard?

Answer

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

(a) Yes;

(b) to (f) All Regional Passport Offices/Passport Offices have been instructed to issue normal passports to all the prospective Hajj pilgrims on priority, whose Police Verification Report (PVR) and other formalities are complete. Completions of formalities such as receipt of PVR sometimes take time for issuance of passports. For those prospective Hajj pilgrims whose Police Verification Report has not been received, Regional Passport Offices/Passport Offices (RPOs/POs) have been authorized to issue Short Validity Passports valid for one year for Saudi Arabia only. In addition, special drives have been launched by all RPOs to clear the backlog of applications of prospective Hajj pilgrims by opening special counters for submission, deploying additional officials, working over weekends, counter delivery of passports etc.

Source: Lok Sabha (House of the People), Unstarred Question No. 4293 asked by Mrs. Tabassum Begum,

<http://164.100.47.132/LssNew/psearch/QResult15.aspx?qref=120736>

35. Hajj Pilgrims in Saudi Arabia Jails, New Delhi, 2 May 2012

Question:

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

- a) Whether the Government has received any information of Indian Hajj Pilgrims being jailed in Saudi Arabia;
- (b) If so, the details thereof, State-wise along with the reasons therefore;
- (c) The steps taken by the Government to get them released immediately; and
- (d) The other steps taken by the Government to ensure that the Hajj Pilgrims are not cheated by the fraudulent travel agencies?

Answer

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

(a) Yes.

(b) State-wise details are attached in ANNEXURE.

(c) Consulate General of India, Jeddah, through the Indian Hajj Mission, takes necessary action in case of arrests of Indian nationals. The General Welfare Wing established during the Hajj season sends its Arabic knowing officials immediately after being informed of such arrests in the Holy Cities to the concerned locations. In many cases, our officials, given the facts and circumstances have been able to get the arrested individuals released. However, in cases where supporting evidence is available with the Saudi authorities to prove the alleged crime, the authorities follow standard legal procedures.

(d) Complaints against Private Tour Operators (PTOs) relating to Hajj pilgrims in Saudi Arabia or in India, if established, may entail blacklisting of the concerned PTO. The Indian Hajj Mission in Jeddah has also established Hajj squads to pay surprise visits to Hajjis coming through PTOs with a view to ascertain that the PTOs ensure the welfare and wellbeing of their Hajjis.

ANNEXURE

S.No.	Name	Cover/Passport Number	State	Reason of arrest	Status
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1.	Javed Khan	UPF-26406/J4017551	U.P.	Mobile theft	8 months jail sentence
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2.	Zakir Husen Fulam Rasul	Came through Private	Gujarat	Mobile theft	3months jail
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Tour Operator/ F-4633130

3.	Safkul SK	WBF-2638/ J847917	West Bengal	Stealing a bag	1 year jail sentence
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Source: Lok Sabha (House of the People), Unstarred Question No. 4181 asked by Mr. K. P. Dhanaplan,

<http://164.100.47.132/LssNew/psearch/QResult15.aspx?qref=120706>

36. Change of Guidelines on Hajj Pilgrimage, New Delhi, 9 May 2012

Question:

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

- (a) Whether the Government has revised the guidelines for Hajj pilgrimage; and
- (b) If so, the details of the major changes effected for Hajj pilgrimage during 2012?

Answer

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

- (a) & (b) Government of India formulates Hajj Policy annually based on the cumulative experience of previous years of the various stakeholders. As regards 2012 Hajj Policy, consultations with stakeholders are currently in progress.

Source: Lok Sabha (House of the People), Unstarred Question No. 5343 asked by Mr. Sai Prathap Annayagari,

<http://164.100.47.132/LssNew/psearch/QResult15.aspx?qref=121840>

37. Karnataka State Hajj Committee, New Delhi, 9 May 2012

Question:

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

- (a) Whether his Ministry received any proposal for framing rules for Karnataka State Hajj Committee;
- (b) If so, the details thereof; and
- (c) The present status of the proposal?

Answer

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

- (a) to (c) Yes. The draft rules submitted by the Karnataka State Hajj Committee have been examined in the Ministry. The draft rules have been returned to the Karnataka State Hajj Committee with a request that amendments proposed by the Ministry of External Affairs on the basis of legal advice be incorporated and the revised draft rules resubmitted to the Ministry.

Source: Lok Sabha (House of the People), Unstarred Question No. 5295 asked by Mr. Shivaramagouda Shivanagouda,

<http://164.100.47.132/LssNew/psearch/QResult15.aspx?qref=121824>

38. Inaugural Address by External Affairs Minister at the 28th All India Annual Conference for Hajj 2012, New Delhi, 22 May 2012

Chairperson of the Hajj Committee of India Mrs. Mohsina Kidwai ji,
Hon'ble Members of Parliament,
Secretary (East) Mr. Sanjay Singh,

Ambassador of Saudi Arabia to India His Excellency Saud Mohammed Al-Sati Ambassador
Hamid Ali Rao,
Distinguished Guests and Invitees,

It is indeed an honour and privilege to address the Hajj Conference 2012. I welcome the dignitaries on the dais and the distinguished audience from all over the country to discuss the issues of concern and collectively consider the solutions and improvements to make Hajj 2012 successful.

Chairperson Mrs. Mohsina Kidwai ji personally wrote to me that Hajj 2011 was a relatively smooth and efficiently organized operation. But I must emphasize that it would not have been possible without the close cooperation of all the stake holders including the Chairperson of the Hajj Committee herself and her team of officers in the forefront apart from the officials of the Ministry of External Affairs, our Embassy in Riyadh, the Consulate General in Jeddah and, last but not least in importance, the Hajj Mission of India comprising over 500 doctors, paramedics, Assistant Hajj Officers, Hajj Assistants etc., and others. Having said that I would like to alert all the officers dealing with Hajj 2012 not to let their guard down and remain alert and ahead of the plans and programmes for Hajj 2012. Hajj is such a complex and tedious operation that we can ill-afford complacency at any point in time.

This year, we started the preparations for Hajj very much ahead of time. As always, we have framed our Hajj policy keeping in view the principle objective of the safety and security and comfort and convenience of our pilgrims. We had planned to announce the 2012 Hajj policy in January or February itself. However, the Special Leave Petition filed by Government of India in the Hon'ble Supreme Court to seek a stay of the Order of the Mumbai High Court on the Hajj PTO Policy 2011 was converted by the Hon'ble Court into a Public Interest Litigation to examine the entire Hajj policy.

It was only after the interim verdict was announced by the Court on May 8, 2012 that the Hajj 2012 Policy could be finalized and released and that was done on May 18, 2012. At this juncture, I would like to share with you the fact that representatives of Private Tour Operators, the Hajj Committee of India and experts from the legal field were closely involved with the Ministry in the process of making the 2012 Hajj Policy. Such a participatory and transparent procedure has been adopted perhaps for the first time ever by the Government.

I hardly need to reiterate the fact that Hajj is one of the most complex tasks undertaken by Government of India outside its borders and involves close coordination with a large number of Agencies within India and in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The principle objective of the Government is to ensure that the best possible service is provided to our pilgrims from the time they arrive at their respective embarkation points in India till they return home safely after fulfilling their dream of performing Hajj.

At no point in time we must lose sight of the fact that it is a once in a life time chance in which a pilgrim expends the savings he would have painstakingly accumulated over his life time. It is the duty of the Government, therefore, to ensure that his hard earned savings are utilized carefully and optimally and every effort is made to ensure that the great journey of each pilgrim is made safe, affordable, comfortable and enjoyable and the collective and cumulative experience of every stake holder engaged in the management of Hajj works towards that objective.

Ours is one of the largest Hajj contingents to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. A large number of Governmental and other Agencies in India and in Saudi Arabia are involved in planning, preparing and conducting the great annual exercise of the Hajj pilgrimage. Problems will continue to be encountered and they would need to be constantly envisaged and addressed. The city check-in system introduced last year proved to be very effective in ensuring that Hajjis do not lose their baggage and return happy, contented and with their baggage and the holy zam zam water cans. We therefore intend to continue to use the city check-in this year too.

We have introduced some new improvements this year too. At the outset, effective Hajj 2012, a pilgrim can use the facility of performing Hajj through the Hajj Committee of India only once in his/her life time as against once in five years which was the case hitherto. Effective Hajj 2012, Hajj applications must have the proof of valid Passports. The Ministry of External Affairs has worked hard to bring about this significant change because of which every pilgrim this year will have an international Passport before proceeding on his pilgrimage. I am happy to state that the Hajj Committee has received more applications this year than last year despite the Passport having been made compulsory.

The Hajj Committee this year has come out with a very lucid and easy to understand Hajj Guide which will be a great help to Hajjis. We have also commenced the work to explore the possibility of permanent accommodation for our Hajjis so that their stay can be made comfortable and affordable as and when the regime is put in place. I am informed that a Committee has been set up on this issue and it has already had its first meeting last evening.

In conclusion, I would like to request that all officers, officials and interlocutors involved in the preparation for Hajj 2012 must keep in close touch so that we work as a closely knit team. The nearly six hundred Government of India Deputationists comprising Doctors, Paramedics, Hajj Assistants and Assistant Hajj Officers including Khadim ul Hujjaj must reach Saudi Arabia well in time and be ready to receive the Hajjis. They must remember that they are the family for each pilgrim in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia away from his home in India and they must ensure that they are accessible immediately to any pilgrim who needs their assistance.

I wish our pilgrims a safe, successful and enjoyable Hajj 2012.

Thank you.

*Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi,
<http://www.mea.gov.in/mystart.php?id=530119484>*

39. Ministry of Civil Aviation Gears up Much in Advance for Hajj 2012 Hajj Pilgrimage to Commence in Second Half of September this Year Civil Aviation Minister Reviews the Preparations, New Delhi, 23 May 2012

Mr. Ajit Singh, the Union Minister of Civil Aviation today held a meeting to review the Hajj operations 2011 and take inputs from the representatives of the Hajj Committee of India (HCOI), State Hajj Committees and all other concerned to make Hajj operations 2012 comfortable and smooth for the Hajj pilgrimage. Mr. Singh said that his Ministry has geared itself to put in place all logistics well before the start of the Hajj flights. Announcing that the Hajj operations are proposed to commence in the second half of September this year, he said that flights would be operated from 21 embarkation points in the country for 'Hajjis' in various states.

The Minister said that penalty provisions are incorporated in proposed MoU for Air Charter service to ensure better facilities for Hajj yatris during air travel and at the airports. These include penalty clause for non-tagging, non-weighing of baggage, for absence of airline personnel at help desks in Jeddah and Medina. Among other facilities proposed, the Minister mentioned, are round the clock control rooms at Jeddah and Medina and at Headquarters in Delhi, proper display of passengers rights at all places in Mecca, Medina, Jeddah and all embarkation points in India.

Mrs. Mohsina Kidwai, Chairperson, Hajj Committee of India (HOCI) also attended the meeting as a special invitee. She underlined the fact that there has been a significant improvement in the Hajj operations since the mechanism for co-ordination among Local Hajj Committees, Central Hajj Committee, Consulate in Jeddah, Ministry of External Affairs and Ministry of Civil Aviation was introduced last year. She expressed hope that the arrangements would be much better this year as the Civil Aviation Minister has taken pains to have the preparations started early and also to review the process personally.

The representatives of the Local Hajj Committees and of the State Governments which included the Ministers were highly appreciative of the initiatives taken by the Civil Aviation Minister so much in advance and they all believed that the Hajj 2012 would definitely be much more comfortable, smooth and easy for the Hajj pilgrims this year with the initiatives taken by the Minister himself.

The Minister assured that the suggestions and inputs received have been taken note of and would be duly considered.

This year about 1, 25,000 pilgrims are expected to visit Saudi Arabia through HOCI to perform Hajj. To facilitate the pilgrims, 21 embarkation points for Hajj 2012 have been year-marked in the country. These are: Ahmadabad, Bengaluru, Kozhikode, Chennai, Delhi, Hyderabad,

Kolkata, Lucknow, Mumbai, Aurangabad, Bhopal, Indore, Nagpur, Gaya, Ranchi, Varanasi, Guwahati, Jaipur, Mangalore, Srinagar and Goa. At all the embarkation points help desks and control room would be installed to help the Hajjis. Simultaneously Facilitation Desks at Jeddah and Medina Airport have also been opened to facilitate the pilgrims.

Dr. Nasim Zaidi, Secretary Civil Aviation and other senior officials of the Ministry were also present in the meeting.

Source: Press Information Bureau, New Delhi,
<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx?relid=84428>

I. Palestine Issue

40. Intervention by Mr. E. Ahamed, Minister of State for External Affairs at the Ministerial Meeting of the NAM Committee on Palestine at Sharm El Sheikh, Sharm El Sheikh, 9 May 2012

Mr. Chairman,

Thank you very much for this opportunity to address this committee.

I recall that this Committee started its work following a decision taken at the Non-Aligned Movement held in New Delhi in 1983.

India's deep association with and continuing commitment to Palestine is rooted in our struggle for independence. It has been a central feature of India's foreign policy even before we achieved independence in 1947.

India has consistently and strongly supported 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 recognized borders, side by side and at peace with Israel, as endorsed in the Arab Peace initiative, the Quartet Roadmap and relevant UN Security Council Resolutions.

We commend the state building efforts of the Palestinian National Authority and their determination for achieving statehood.

Mr. Chairman, we are concerned at the situation of political prisoners. The expansion of illegal settlement activity is a matter of great concern.

Our Committee and the international community have been making decisions, but the situation remains very difficult and unresolved. We need to think how we can get these decisions implemented.

Mr. Chairman, last year, Palestine filed an application for its full membership to the United Nations.

Our Prime Minister, in his speech at the UN General Assembly in September last year, said that India looks forward to welcoming Palestine as an equal member of the United Nations.

We extended our support to the admission of Palestine to UNESCO. We consider it an important step forward towards Palestine joining as a full member of the United Nations.

We have noted Palestine's proposal made here to approach the UN General Assembly for recognizing its Statehood and upgrading their status. This will have our strong support.

I have had a personal rapport with the Palestinian leadership. I met President Arafat just before his death. In fact, I was the last foreign leader to meet him. I am aware how difficult situation he was facing at that time and the sufferings of his people.

The aspirations of the independence of the Palestinian people have not been achieved so far. Nothing seems to be moving and the settlement activity continues unabated.

President Abbas is facing a very difficult situation and is seeking support from the international community. I personally feel that we should utilize our collective wisdom and work towards implementation of some of the ideas proposed here. Hon'ble Foreign Minister of Indonesia has made certain proposals. We need to see how best the Committee can cooperate in moving forward with this process.

Mr. Chairman, in conclusion, I wish to avail this opportunity to renew India's commitment to the work of this Committee, confident that under your guidance, we would contribute in ever-larger measure to the work of the Movement in support of the Palestinian people.

Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi,
<http://www.mea.gov.in/mystart.php?id=530119389>

m. Arab- India Partnership

41. Key note address by Minister of State for External Affairs Mr. E. Ahamed at the 3rd Arab India Partnership Conference, Abu Dhabi, 22 May 2012

Her Excellency Sheikha Lubna, Minister of Foreign Trade of the United Arab Emirates,

My colleague Ministers from Arab countries,

His Excellency, Ambassador Ahmed bin Heili, Deputy Secretary General, League of Arab States,

Mr. Mohammed Al Alromaithy, Chairman of the Abu Dhabi Chamber of Commerce & Industry,

Ms. Naina Lal Kidwai, Senior Vice President of Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry,

Mr. Adnan Kassar, President, General Union of Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture,

Mr. Hamdi Al Tabbah, Chairman of the Federation of Arab Businessmen,

Participating industry and business leaders from India and the Arab world, Ambassadors, other representatives and distinguished guests

It is a great pleasure for me to be present at this important and prestigious event, a meeting of friends from India and the Arab world and to sit, discuss and contribute towards mutual development of the people of the whole region through further strengthening of trade and investment opportunities.

The bedrock of India-Arab relations is embedded in antiquity, with evidence of historic, cultural and civilizational ties binding our regions dating back to the early years of recorded history. Legends abound with the adventures of Indian and Arab seafarers in times prior to our emergence as nation states. There is evidence of trade links between the Harappan civilization in India and that of Dilmun in the Gulf. Indian and Arab traders succeeded in building trade and commercial linkages between the two regions which have grown from strength to strength.

It was with the intention to further add momentum to the India-Arab relationship that the Government of India and the League of Arab States established this forum in 2008 to identify the sectors which need investment for development. Through the two editions held in 2008 and 2010 at New Delhi, with the active participation of government and business leaders, trading communities and financial sectors, several projects have already been established. Trade between India and the Arab world, which stood at US\$114 billion in 2008-09, has steadily increased to reach US\$144 billion in 2010-11. Of this, India-UAE trade alone accounts for US\$67 billion, i.e. more than 46%, and it is, therefore, quite appropriate that Abu Dhabi is host to the third edition of this prestigious conference. I thank the Government of the United Arab Emirates, His Highness Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Minister of Foreign Affairs for this gesture and for his gracious and generous hospitality.

Distinguished guests, Government of India has always extended the benefits it had achieved through skill and knowledge development to Arab countries through its programme of educational scholarships, manpower training, transfer of technology etc. It has established several development projects in the area of small and medium enterprises. Government of India has also extended concessional financial assistance and grants for utilization for execution of industrial projects.

India is, as you are aware, one of the fastest growing major economies of the world. Despite the adverse international environment, India has managed to maintain a growth rate of over 7% per annum. We are confident that the strong fundamentals of its economy will help India return to a sustained growth path of about 8-10% per annum in the coming years on account of the following reasons:

- We have robust economic indicators including high domestic saving rate; increasing direct and indirect tax revenues; high agricultural growth; a strong manufacturing base and a booming service sector spearheaded by the information and communication technology sector.
- India has a very young population and over half of the working population is in its twenties.
- Over the past few years, we have invested heavily in education, health and agriculture to give a new deal to rural India. Our rural markets are now booming and the middle class is growing rapidly.
- India is poised to continue to be a frontline player in the global knowledge economy.
- We have very ambitious plans for the development of our infrastructure. We are planning to secure investment of almost \$ 1 trillion in the next 5 years in new projects in highways, power plants, mass transport systems, ports and airports. This will be achieved through both public and private investment and Public-Private Partnerships.
- We are determined to pursue a strategy of green growth. We are committed to increasing energy efficiency and the share of renewable, including solar and nuclear power, in our energy mix.

This makes India one of the most attractive destinations for foreign direct investments. India invites our longstanding friends from the Arab world to participate in India's growth story which would be mutually beneficial.

The Arab world has been home to millions of Indians, who have been earning a living and, at the same time, contributing their share through hard work and dedication in developing the respective economies. This is a fine example of mutual growth. We see here business leaders from India who have succeeded in establishing their presence in the Arab world over several decades and who have acted as goodwill envoys between India and the Arab countries. I wish them all well and say India is proud of their achievements, which could be emulated by others. The Abu Dhabi Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry have made this congregation of Indian and Arab business leaders possible and I must congratulate them for the success of this prestigious event.

In this day of an inter-dependent world, no country can remain unaffected by a crisis in another part of the world, as has been witnessed in the last few years by the global economic downturn. This is true for India as well as the Arab world.

It would be a remiss if I do not mention the recent winds of change which swept through several Arab countries. Continued peace and stability in the region is of interest to all of us. We support addressing of all issues through peaceful dialogue and negotiations with countries being free to determine their own pathways to national development.

Coming back to the Conference, the focus this year is on investment projects which could be identified in the development of Small and Medium Enterprises; infrastructure facilities such as rail, road, airport, ports, power, water etc.; real estate business; healthcare; tourism; transportation; education & human resource development; IT & IT-enabled services; chemicals & petrochemicals; minerals and metals; oil and gas. There is a tremendous need for development of these sectors both in India, with its vast population to cater to and the Arab world.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, we shall have the pleasure of listening to experts from the above fields during the different sessions today and tomorrow and there will be opportunities for business delegations and project companies to interact and identify future projects.

I take this opportunity to wish all success to the participants of this Conference. I am sure India and the Arab world would find the Conference of immense value in devising ways and means to ensure a better tomorrow for our peoples.

Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi,
<http://www.mea.gov.in/mystart.php?id=530119485>

Multilateral Issues/ Regional Issues

n. India and the NAM Ministerial Meeting

42. Statement by Mr. E. Ahamed, Hon'ble Minister of State for External Affairs at the NAM Ministerial Meeting, Sharm El-Sheikh, 9 May 2012

Mr. Chairman,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset, I would like to thank you for your Chairmanship of this Ministerial Meeting and the excellent arrangements and warm hospitality extended to us.

I would also like to express our deep appreciation for the exemplary manner in which Egypt has guided the Non-Aligned Movement.

Mr. Chairman, in today's increasingly inter-connected and inter-dependent world, the challenges confronting us are much more complex, multidimensional and trans-national in nature.

In facing these challenges, the unity of the Movement is of paramount importance.

Mr. Chairman, winds of change are sweeping across West Asia and North Africa today. People are demanding a greater role for themselves in shaping their destiny, politically and economically.

These aspirations need to be channelized into an inclusive and participatory polity while maintaining social stability and cohesion.

This process should take into consideration each society's particular circumstances and the genius of its people and not to cede any space to extremism.

Insofar as the international community is concerned, diplomatic efforts rather than military means should be pursued. Although they require patience and persistence, they provide more durable solutions.

It is also important to respect the unity, territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Member States.

As the world's largest democracy and a fellow developing country, India stands ready to share its institution-building experience.

Mr. Chairman, while talking about the changes taking place in West Asia and North Africa, we must not forget the long-standing issue of Palestine.

India supports 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 recognized borders, side by side and at peace with Israel, as endorsed in the Arab Peace initiative, the Quartet Roadmap and relevant UN Security Council Resolutions.

We have also been at the forefront of supporting Palestine's statehood and membership of the UN.

Mr. Chairman, some of the major challenges confronting the world today relate to the world economy and its impact on development.

It is imperative that we make all efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and eradicate poverty.

Stability in food and energy prices also needs to be a critical endeavour.

We must bring about a qualitative enhancement in the health and education situation of our people.

Sustainable development and inclusive growth need to be integral to our efforts.

The development imperatives of developing countries and social cohesion and environmental protection must be ensured in the outcome of the Rio +20 Conference.

Climate change must be addressed based on the principles of equity and common but differentiated responsibility.

Mr. Chairman, we need to reinvigorate our efforts towards more democratic, equitable, and legitimized platforms of global governance that reflect contemporary realities.

The world's international institutions, in particular, the UN and its Security Council require fundamental changes.

Genuine reform is essential, in particular of the Security Council and it must encompass expansion in both permanent and non-permanent categories of membership and an improvement of its working methods.

Mr. Chairman,

Our African brethren constitute the largest single grouping in our Movement. The Movement must continue to work towards ensuring Africa's pre-eminence in the global development agenda.

We are happy that at this meeting we will be adopting a declaration to commemorate the centenary of the African National Conference.

We must ensure that the needs of the Least Developed Countries are given high priority.

The special requirements of the Small Island Developing States must also be addressed.

India is strongly committed to South-South Cooperation with fellow developing countries worldwide. Partnership with Africa is a cornerstone of our development partnership efforts.

Mr. Chairman, terrorism is one of the greatest scourges of our times. It cannot be condoned or justified on any ground whatsoever.

The fight against terrorism must be unrelenting and directed not only against the terrorists, but also against those who sponsor, abet or support them.

We need to enhance international cooperation against terrorism and plug the gaps in the legal framework, including through the adoption of a Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism (CCIT) in the UN.

Mr. Chairman, India attaches the highest priority to the goal of nuclear disarmament which is also enshrined in the Rajiv Gandhi Action Plan of 1988.

The Movement should continue to support international efforts for achieving universal and non-discriminatory nuclear disarmament and a world free of all nuclear weapons within a time-bound framework.

NAM should support the UN disarmament machinery as stated in the First special session of the General Assembly on Disarmament.

Mr. Chairman, we must build on areas of commonality, guided by a forward looking and focused agenda for our Movement, which draws inspiration from our convictions of the past and our aspirations for the future.

Diversity is our strength. As we confront the challenges of today, it is imperative that we act in unity and solidarity.

I am confident that our comprehensive deliberations during this Meeting would be very useful for the forthcoming NAM Summit in Iran in August, 2012.

Thank you.

*Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi,
<http://www.mea.gov.in/mystart.php?id=530119387>*

o. Friends of Yemen Meeting

43. Intervention by Shri E Ahamed, Minister of State for External Affairs at the Third Ministerial Meeting of the Friends of Yemen, Riyadh, 23 May 2012

Mr Chairman, His Royal Highness Prince Saud Al Faisal
His Excellency, Mohammad Basindawa, Prime Minister of Yemen
Friends of Yemen
And distinguished invitees,

At the outset, let me congratulate the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council and the United Nations for having initiated the process of peaceful political transition in Yemen, thereby preventing the country and the region from plunging into a new turmoil.

I take this opportunity to strongly condemn ghastly terrorist attack on national day of Yemen and we express our heartfelt condolences to the people of Yemen. I also share the sentiments of other speakers that such incidents serve only to further strengthen our resolve to fight the forces of terrorism.

India supports peace, security, stability and territorial integrity of Yemen. We are aware of the extraordinary political, security, economic and humanitarian challenges faced by Yemen in the current times. In this hour of need for Yemen, India expresses its solidarity with the people and Government of Yemen in addressing the various challenges being faced by Yemen. Keeping in view our ancient civilizational links and close friendship with Yemen, India has decided to join the 'Friends of Yemen Group' with a view to strengthen the international efforts in assisting Yemen in this critical phase in the history of Yemen.

India already has an elaborate programme of capacity building and training in specialized fields for Yemeni citizens. Likewise hundreds of students avail of educational scholarships offered by Government of India. India is also conscious of needs of Yemen in the humanitarian fields. A consignment of rice valued at USD 2 million equivalent is on its way to Yemen. In addition, in

our engagement under the 'Friends of Yemen Group', we would be happy to look at specific proposals for assistance from Government of Yemen, particularly in the field of training, capacity building, entrepreneurship development, the employment generating Small and Medium sector, education and Information Technology within the bilateral framework or under India's programme for assisting the Least Developed Countries (LDCs).

Projects and Programmes considered urgent and necessary by Government of Yemen can be converted into Feasibility Reports that can be made available to Government of India for consideration under the umbrella of Credit lines for LDCs already announced by India during the India-LDC Ministerial Conference in New Delhi on February 18-19, 2011 and the UN LDC Meeting at Istanbul, Turkey on May 9-13, 2011.

Yemen can also benefit from concrete ideas and proposals that would emerge during India's chairmanship of the Indian-Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation (IOR-ARC) of which Yemen was a former Chairman and an active member.

With these few words, I would like to wish the friendly people of Yemen continued progress, peace and prosperity and reassure them of India's support as the country traverses through a crucial phase in its history.

Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi,
<http://www.mea.gov.in/mystart.php?id=530119507>

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

Note: One Crore: ten millions.

Compiled by Alvite N

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