

INDIA SPEAKS

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BILATERAL ISSUES

a. EGYPT

1. Gandhi in Tahrir poster design contest deadline extended till the 25 December 2012, Cairo, 12 December 2012.

At the request of various participating institutions, the Embassy of India in Cairo has decided to extend the deadline for the poster design competition themed, “Did you sense the spirit of Gandhi in Tahrir?” by ten days. The new deadline for receiving the entries will now be 25 December 2012.

The contest, which was a tribute to the peaceful Egyptian revolution, was announced on 2 October 2012, the birthday of Mahatma Gandhi who embodied the spirit of non-violence in India's struggle for independence. The Embassy of India in Cairo plans to organize an exhibition with the leading entries on 25 January 2013, the second anniversary of the Egyptian revolution.

The Indian Community Association of Egypt is sponsoring a trip to India to the first prize winner of the contest. The visit to India will include a workshop at India's prestigious National Institute of Design, Ahmadabad in Gujarat state of India.

More details of the contest can be found at the website of the Embassy at www.indembcairo.com or the face book page of the Embassy www.facebook.com/IndianEmbassyCairo or from the press office of the Embassy at 23925162 and 23925243.

Source: Embassy of India, Cairo,

<http://www.indembcairo.com/Web%20Pages/Archives%20Eng%202012/Dec%2012.htm>

b. ISRAEL

2. Ambassador' speech at the inauguration of exhibition of paintings by Tami Guttman, Tel Aviv, 18 December 2012.

I thank Tami Guttman for inviting me to inaugurate this Art Exhibition. I have met Tami Guttman only once when she came to invite me for this event. But when I saw her paintings I understood what she was trying to communicate to me more than a thousand words would have. I understood that when she visited our country, she developed a spiritual connection with India. This bond expressed itself through the medium of a simple piece of cloth – the saree that is worn by millions of Indian women and is a unique symbol of Indian identity and culture.

When I looked closely at Tami's paintings, I found in them the elements of colour, complexity and vitality that are an integral part of the life and ethos of India. But when I looked from a distance, I also found an underlying unity and harmony tying all these elements together. So I congratulate Tami for capturing the spirit of India in her paintings. In some sense, the saree reflects the wisdom of ancient India – how a simple piece of cloth can be intricately folded to make a beautiful dress that preserves the modesty of a woman while fully expressing her grace, beauty and character.

In many ways the spiritual connection with India in Tami Guttman's paintings reflects the larger relationship between India and Israel. We are two old civilizations of the world who are now getting to know each other again. In India, as many of you know, the Jewish people have found a safe and secure haven like no other country for many thousands of years. Not only that, the small Jewish community in India managed to preserve their rich and unique religious and cultural traditions despite being numerically dominated by other religions such as Hinduism, Islam and Christianity all of which flourished in India.

In fact Hebrew was taught in schools in the Bombay area as an official second language and Bombay University had a Chair for Hebrew Studies much before the State of Israel came into being. In recent years relations between India and Israel have taken huge strides. Our trade is increasing rapidly. More and more Israelis are travelling to India. We are cooperating in diverse areas including energy, agriculture and defence. But perhaps the most important of the areas that we are promoting is cultural exchange and people-to-people contact. It is only through these connections that we can learn about each other, understand the richness of each other's culture and build long term bonds of friendship.

It is for this reason that I congratulate Tami Guttman and all the others who have arranged this exhibition. It gives me great pleasure to open this exhibition of paintings that are wonderful expressions of Indian and Israeli culture. Thank you.

Source: Embassy of India, Tel Aviv,

<http://www.indembassy.co.il/Additional%20files/Events%20and%20Speeches/AMBASSADOR%20%E2%80%99S%20SPEECH%20AT%20THE%20INAUGURATION%20OF%20EXHIBITION%20OF%20PAINTINGS%20BY%20TAMI%20GUTTMAN.pdf>

3. Trade relations with Israel, New Delhi, 19 December 2012.

Question:

- a) The year-wise volume of trade between India and Israel during the last four years including imports and exports;
- b) The expected volume of trade with Israel during the current year;
- c) Whether Free Trade Agreement (FTA) is likely to be signed with that country;
- d) If so, the details in this regard; and
- e) Its likely impact on the trade relations with other countries in the Middle East?

Answer

Minister of Commerce and Industry (Anand Sharma)

a) to e): A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

For the annexure: <http://164.100.24.219/annex/227/As372.docx>

Source: Rajya Sabha (Council of States), Starred Question No. 372 asked by Mr. Mohammed Adeep, <http://164.100.47.5/qsearch/QResult.aspx>

4. Ambassador's speech at Holocaust Seminar organized for a delegation of Indian Educationists, Tel Aviv, 23 December 2012

Today is a day of remembrance. Today we remember the victims of one of history's greatest tragedies. We remember the suffering, the loss and the shame of an entire generation of people.

But today our sadness and grief is tinged with redemption and hope. From ruin and hopelessness, the Jewish people rose to build the State of Israel that is admired for its great economic achievements and the talent of its people. The enormous sacrifices that were made did not go in vain. A proud people regained their honour and respect.

And it is this triumph of the human spirit that gives us hope for the future.

India too built a new nation from the tragedy of partition. We faced enormous challenges of developing a very poor country divided by religion, language and region. But our founding fathers set before the nation the basic principles that guide our nationhood – pluralism, tolerance, secularism and equality.

We are still a nation in the making. But India has shown that it is possible for people of different faiths to live and prosper together as a united nation. Our democracy allows each citizen the space to promote his or her faith and identity.

It is this tolerance that has allowed different faiths to flourish in India. The Jews have been in India for thousands of years. They were dominated numerically by Hindus, Muslims and

Christians. But they were never assimilated and preserved their faith through centuries. They prayed in their synagogues and celebrated their festivals. Hebrew was taught in schools and universities in Bombay long before the State of Israel was created.

The Jews of India like other Jewish Diasporas excelled in different fields. They became well known poets, soldiers and teachers. They enriched India's tradition of tolerance and peaceful co-existence. A Jewish woman named Annie Samson was the founding principal of built the Anjuman-e-Islam school for Muslim girls. I cannot think of a more inspiring example of inter-faith harmony than this – of a Jewish woman dedicating her life to the education of Muslim girls.

The Indian Jewish community in Israel is a respected community in the country. They are proud citizens of their adopted country. But in their hearts they retain the values and culture of the land they were born to. There is nothing wrong in doing so. When we celebrate and reinforce our different identities, we strengthen the bonds of friendship and mutual understanding among people. We should respect and celebrate what is common between us and what unites us, rather than what divides us.

So, with these words I wish to welcome the visitors who have come from India. I hope that they will see for themselves the warmth and goodwill that the Israelis have for India. Thank you.

Source: Embassy of India, Tel Aviv,

<http://www.indembassy.co.il/Additional%20files/Events%20and%20Speeches/Ambassador%20speech%20at%20holocaust%20seminar.pdf>

C. KUWAIT

5. Indian workers detained in Kuwait, New Delhi, 6 December 2012

Question:

Will the Minister of Overseas Indian Affairs be pleased to state:

- (a) Whether around 2,000 Indian workers have been detained in Kuwait recently;
- (b) If so, the details thereof;
- (c) Whether the Indian Embassy in Kuwait has established contacts with the detained Indian workers;
- (d) Whether the said incident in Kuwait once again exposes the flaws of the sponsorship system; and
- (e) If so, the steps taken by Government in this regard?

Answer

Minister of Overseas Indian Affairs (Vayalar Ravi)

(a) and (b): As per the information given by the Kuwaiti authorities, around 2,000 Indians were arrested on 19 September 2012. After verification/checking of records, 251 were deported and rest were released.

(c): Yes. The officers of the Indian Embassy were in regular contact with the local authorities as well as the detained Indians for securing their release or facilitating their return to India. The reason for arrest was alleged visa violation.

(d): Sponsorship System is the internal matter of the country concerned.

(e): Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs has recently issued an Advisory asking the Protectors of Emigrants to ensure that Recruiting Agents invariably caution domestic workers intending to go to Kuwait and to sensitize them about the implication of the Sponsorship System.

Source: Rajya Sabha (Council of States), Unstarred Question No. 1471 asked by Dr. K.P. Ramalingam, <http://164.100.47.5/qsearch/OREsult.aspx>

d. LIBYA

6. Former Prime Minister of India Mr. I.K. Gujral passed away, Tripoli, 1 December 2012.

The Embassy of India, Tripoli, presents its compliments to all International Organizations and Diplomatic Missions in Tripoli, Libya, and has the regretful honour to state that His Excellency Mr. I.K. Gujral, former Prime Minister of India passed away at 1530 hours on Friday, 30 November 2012, after a prolonged illness.

The Government of India has declared seven days of national mourning as a mark of respect for the departed leader.

The Embassy of India has the further honour to inform that a Book of Condolence will be opened at the Chancery for signing on 3 December 2012 from 1400-1600 hrs and on 4 December 2012, from 1000-1230 hrs and 1400-1600 hrs.

The Embassy of India, Tripoli, avails itself of this opportunity to renew to all international Organizations and Diplomatic Missions in Tripoli, Libya the assurances of its highest consideration.

Source: Embassy of India, Tripoli, <http://indianembassy.ly/index.php?mact=News,cntnt01,detail,0&cntnt01articleid=25&cntnt01pagelimit=5&cntnt01returnid=15>

7. High National Election Commission of Libya delegation visits India from 26-30 November 2012, Tripoli, 2 December 2012.

India greatly appreciates the onset of democracy in Libya and welcomed the highly successful 7 July elections for the General National Congress which were conducted by the High National Election Commission of Libya.

In his congratulatory message to His Excellency Mr. Ali Zeidan, Prime Minister of Libya, His Excellency Dr. Manmohan Singh, Prime Minister of India underlined that India and Libya have always shared warm and friendly relations and India looks forward to further strengthen and

diversify its bilateral cooperation with Libya under the new Libyan leadership. India will continue to extend all possible support to Libya in the true spirit of mutual respect and shared values.

India is the largest functioning democracy in the world with over 650 million voters exercising their franchise regularly in various elections across the country. In order to share India's experience in election management & to exchange views the Election Commission of India invited a delegation from Libya. A four member delegation from the High National Election Commission of Libya led by Vice Chairman, H.E. Mr. Nagieb Abd Al-Salam Mohammed Alrabti visited India from 26-30 November 2012 to interact with their Indian counterparts.

The Libyan Delegation interacted with Election Commissioners & senior officials at the delegation level talks. The Libyan delegation also called on the Chief Election Commissioner H.E. Mr. V. Sampath, who hosted a lunch in their honour. A presentation on Electronic Voting Machines (EVM) was made by the Deputy Election Commissioner. Elections in India are held through EVMs.

The Delegation also interacted with H.E. Mr. Sanjay Singh, Vice Minister of Ministry of External Affairs over a luncheon meeting during which various avenues of bilateral cooperation were discussed including Indian assistance in capacity building. It will be recalled that only last month two HNEC officials had attended an election management course at the Training Institute of the Election Commission of India.

During the visit a Memorandum of Understanding between India and Libya on Mutual Cooperation in the Field of Elections was signed on 30 November 2012. The MoU seek to promote cooperation in the field of electoral management and administration, support in exchanging information, expertise, organizing training of personnel and other modality of cooperation as mutually agreed by the two election commissions.

Source: Embassy of India, Tripoli, Libya,

<http://indianembassy.ly/index.php?mact=News,cntnt01,detail,0&cntnt01articleid=26&cntnt01pagelimit=5&cntnt01returnid=15>

8. Ambassador Meeting with His Excellency Mr. Nurideen Abdulhamid Dagman, Minister of Health of Libya, Tripoli, 4 December 2012

On 3 December 2012, His Excellency Mr. Anil Trigunayat, Ambassador of India called on His Excellency Mr. Nurideen Abdulhamid Dagman, Minister for Health of Libya. H.E. the Minister was accompanied by Dr. Saad Yakoub Adbelrazik, Deputy Health Minister and other senior officials.

During the meeting H.E. the Minister appreciated India's assistance by way of gift of medicines amounting to US\$1 million and the contribution of Indian doctors, nurses and other paramedic staff to Libya especially during the revolution. He also acknowledged the excellent treatment

being given to over 350 injured Libyans in India. Ambassador offered India's assistance in capacity building in the healthcare sector by way of tailored training programmes and training of Libyan doctors in India. Discussions were also held on establishment of an Artificial Limb Centre and provision of 1000 such limbs as a gift of Government of India to Libya.

Ambassador extended invitation to H.E. the Minister to lead a delegation to the "Indian Pharmaceutical and Healthcare Exposition" in April 2013 in Mumbai.

Source: Embassy of India, Tripoli,

<http://indianembassy.ly//index.php?mact=News,cntnt01,detail,0&cntnt01articleid=27&cntnt01pagelimit=5&cntnt01returnid=15>

9. ITEC Day in Libya, Tripoli, 10 December 2012

On 9 December 2012, the ITEC day was organized at Ambassador's residence. A number of Libyan ITEC graduates, some senior officials of Libyan Foreign Ministry, media persons and the Embassy officials attended the function.

The Chief Guest for the event was Ambassador Ramadan Rahim, Director General in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who appreciated India's assistance to New Libya in capacity building. Ambassador H.E. Anil Trigunayat urged the Libyan friends to avail of this opportunity to the maximum extent possible and also offered to arrange some tailor-made programme, if needed by the Libyan government. India has offered to set up a Vocational Training Centre in Libya, he added.

ITEC (Indian Technical & Economic Cooperation) programme is fully sponsored by the Government of India. 42 institutions conduct around 200 short-term, medium-term and long-term courses every year. The training program is demand driven and subjects selected are of interest to developing countries for their working professionals on a wide and diverse range of skills and disciplines. The courses have been divided into seven broad categories for easy identification. Government Courses, IT and Telecommunication, Management, SME/Rural Development, Specialized Courses, Technical Courses, Environment and Renewable Energy Courses. The most sought after courses are in the field of Information Technology and Linguistics (English). Training is imparted to Government officials in areas such as Finance & Accounts, Audit, Banking, Education Planning & Administration, Parliamentary Studies, Crime Records, Management, Environment etc. Every year, around 5000 slots are allocated to ITEC partner countries to attend the various civilian training courses in India.

Govt. of India allocates 25 fully funded training slots to suitable candidates from Libya every year. So far this year five Libyan candidates have joined the ITEC courses. A number of other applications are under process. India has also offered the Libyans several other training courses under India-Africa Forum Summit as well as a Professional Course for Foreign Diplomats under FSI training program.

In addition to the above the Indian government had extended US\$1 million in humanitarian assistance to the Libyan National Transitional Council (NTC) and also on their request provided life saving and essential drugs costing another US \$1 million to new Libya. India has also offered to provide 1000 artificial limbs as a gift of Govt. of India to Libya and establish Vocational Training Centres as well as an artificial Limb camp and Centre for injured Libyans. Discussions are also being held for establishment of several other regional research centres under the aegis of India Africa Forum Summit.

The Libyan trainees also highly appreciated the goodwill gesture by the Government of India and shared their experiences.

Source: Embassy of India, Tripoli,

<http://indianembassy.ly/index.php?mact=News,cntnt01,detail,0&cntnt01articleid=29&cntnt01pagelimit=5&cntnt01returnid=15>

e. PALESTINE

10. Speech by Minister of State for External Affairs Mr. E. Ahamed on the occasion of International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People organized by Indian Council of World Affairs, New Delhi, 6 December 2012.

Your Excellency, Mr. Adli Hassan Shaban Sadeq, Ambassador of Palestine in India;

Your Excellency, Dr. Ahmed Salem Saleh Al-Wahishi, Chief Representative, League of Arab States Mission;

Ms. Lisa Grande, UN Resident Coordinator;

Mr. Rajiv K. Bhatia, Director General of the Indian Council of World Affairs;

Excellencies, distinguished invitees;

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I feel honoured to be here today amidst this august gathering to mark the important occasion of International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. All of us present here, representing a wide cross-section of countries, in our own ways are here to express our solidarity with the people of Palestine in their struggle for their legitimate rights.

At this juncture, allow me to extend heartfelt congratulations to the people of Palestine and its leadership for obtaining the 'Non-Member Observer State' status in the UN General Assembly. India, which has always played a proactive role in garnering support for the Palestinian cause in multilateral fora, co-sponsored this resolution on enhancing Palestine's status in the UNGA. It is a decisive achievement for Palestine in the history of its long and arduous struggle to reach its final goal of an independent and viable Palestinian State. However, the journey doesn't end here. We will continue to support Palestine's bid for full and equal membership of the United Nations. India had also played an active role in supporting the efforts of the State of Palestine to secure full membership status at UNESCO.

India reiterates its unwavering support to the Palestinian cause at every available opportunity and forum. Hon'ble Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh in his message on the occasion of International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people, organized by the UN on 29 November 2012, reiterated India's strong and unwavering support to the Palestinian cause. It is a matter of great honour that our Prime Minister's message was given pride of place and was the first to be read out in the UNGA among the messages from Heads of Governments.

It would be a remiss if I do not mention the recent events in Gaza that led to death of more than 150 Palestinians including innocent children and women, with injuries to more than 1200 people. We categorically condemn the violence in Gaza and I have no hesitation in saying that disproportionate use of force is completely unacceptable. India, jointly with Brazil and South Africa, has also expressed the strongest condemnation of violence between Israel and Palestine and urged the need to lift the blockage in Gaza which continues to worsen the already dire socio-economic and humanitarian situation in Gaza.

Excellencies, we have also chaired and proactively participated as member in the discussions on the violence in Gaza in the UN Security Council under India's presidency.

The ceasefire reached between Israel and Gaza is welcome and we hope that both the parties shall remain committed to the terms of the ceasefire.

Excellencies, Indians have always placed Palestinian close to their hearts. Even before Independence, India had demonstrated its solidarity with the Palestinian people and had looked forward to the emergence of an independent democratic state in Palestine in which the rights of all communities would be protected.

India was the first non-Arab State to recognize the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people in 1975 and in 1988 became one of the first countries to recognize the State of Palestine. India opened a Representative Office in Palestine in 1996 following the establishment of the Palestinian National Authority.

Excellencies, since the opening of the Representative Office, India has also extended material assistance to the Palestinian National Authority and has been a partner in the socio-economic development of Palestine in its quest for a life of dignity and self reliance and a future full of promises. Our assistance has been for humanitarian relief, development projects, establishment of educational and training facilities, budgetary support etc. India has been involved with training a large number of Palestinian officials from economic, industrial and financial sectors and special courses for Palestinian diplomats have been conducted at our Foreign Service Institute.

I also fondly recall my visit to Ramallah on 17 September 2004 when I had an honour of meeting the undisputed leader of the Palestinian People Yasser Arafat. That was the time when he was

under siege and was confined to his compound in Ramallah. During that visit I also took with me a consignment of medicine and 50 specially built vehicles. President Arafat was very overwhelmed while receiving me and was thankful for the Government of India to send me at a time when no one was with him. I spent one full day with him and also offered Friday prayers with him at Muqata led by Grand Imam of Al Aqsa Mosque. It was a very emotional visit for me which I can't forget to this day. Sadly President Arafat passed away after few months only. However our friendship with the Palestinian people has continued.

During the recent visit of Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas to India in September this year (2012), we pledged an amount of US\$ 10 million as budgetary support to Palestine, and signed three agreements for cooperation in the fields of information and communication technology, vocational training and construction of schools in Palestine. India also contributes US\$ 1 million annually to United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East, UNRWA in addition to Indian's generous support at various Donor conferences for the Palestinian people. Jointly with Brazil and South Africa as partners in IBSA, India is implementing developmental projects in Palestine.

I am happy to note that the Palestinian Embassy has started functioning from its new Building in Chanakyapuri, which was built as a gift of the government and people of India to the Palestinian people. The building was formally inaugurated by President Mahmoud Abbas and former External Affairs Minister Mr. S.M. Krishna during President Abbas' visit to India on 11 September 2012.

We will continue to support the development and nation-building efforts of Palestine.

Excellencies, in line with our support for United Nations Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, India supports a negotiated solution resulting in a sovereign, independent, viable and united State of Palestine living within secure and recognized borders with East Jerusalem as its Capital, side by side and at peace with Israel as endorsed in the Quartet Roadmap and United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1397 & 1515.

India has supported the Arab Peace Plan, which calls for withdrawal of Israel to pre-1967 borders, along with recognition of Israel and the establishment of the State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital.

India had welcomed the 'direct talks' between Israel and Palestine. However the continued stalemate in the situation and hardening of positions is a matter of concern. We are hopeful of resumption of 'direct talks' leading to final resolution of the conflict. However it should be noted that the settlement activities by Israel in the occupied Palestinian territories are not serving the cause of peace. We have called for an end to these Israeli settlements activities and will continue to do so in light of recent announcement by Israel to expand these settlements in the occupied

Palestinian territories. We also urge for an early and significant easing of restrictions on the free movement of persons and goods within Palestine.

Excellencies, let me take this opportunity to re-affirm India's consistent and unwavering support to the friendly people of Palestine and reiterate India's belief that a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the region can be achieved through negotiations and dialogue so that a sovereign, independent, viable State of Palestine living side by side within secured borders, with the State of Israel, becomes a reality.

I thank the Indian Council for World Affairs for organizing this important event.

Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, <http://www.mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/20909/Speech+by+Minister+of+State+for+External+Affairs+Shri+E+Ahamed+on+the+occasion+of+International+Day+of+Solidarity+with+the+Palestinian+People+organized+by+Indian+Council+of+World+Affairs>

11. Aid to Palestine, New Delhi, 12 December 2012.

Question:

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

- (a) Whether the Government has announced US\$10 million aid to Palestine;
- (b) If so, the details thereof;
- (c) Whether it is true that India has decided to back Palestine for membership of the United Nations; and
- (d) If so, the details thereof?

Answer

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

- (a) Yes.
- (b) The Government of India announced US\$ 10 million as budgetary assistance to Palestine during the State Visit of Palestinian President Mr. Mahmoud Abbas on 11 September 2012.
- (c) Yes.
- (d) India has always espoused the Palestinian cause in the UN. India strongly supported the Palestinian application for membership of UN in the United Nations Security Council in 2011. Hon'ble Prime Minister had stated in his speech in the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) on 24 September 2011 that India looks forward to welcoming Palestine as an equal member of the United Nations. During the State Visit of Palestinian President Mr. Mahmoud Abbas to India on 11 September 2012, Hon'ble Prime Minister stated that India will continue to support Palestine's bid for full and equal membership of the United Nations. Recently, India co-sponsored and supported the resolution on enhancing Palestine's status from 'Non-Member Observer Entity' to 'Non-Member Observer State' in the UNGA which was adopted on 29 November 2012.

Source: Lok Sabha (House of the People), Unstarred Question No. 2999 asked by Mr. C. Sivasami, <http://164.100.47.132/LssNew/psearch/QResult15.aspx?qref=132083>

12. Support for independent State of Palestine, New Delhi, 20 December 2012

Question:

- (a) Whether Government still maintain a stand of supporting the demand of an independent sovereign State of Palestine; and
- (b) Whether it would take initiative to bring pressure along with international community on Israel to dissuade it from resorting to incessant aggression on its neighbours?

Answer

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

- (a) & (b) Yes. India continues to remain steadfast and unwavering in its commitment to the Palestinian cause for a sovereign, independent, viable and united State of Palestine living within secure and recognized borders with East Jerusalem as its Capital, side by side and at peace with Israel as endorsed in the Quartet Roadmap and United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1397 & 1515.

India has urged for cessation of violence in Palestine and for resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict through negotiation and peaceful means. India has also participated in multilateral and international efforts, including in the United Nations, Non-Aligned Movement and by the India-Brazil-South Africa (IBSA) forum, for a negotiated and peaceful solution of the Israel-Palestine issue.

Source: Rajya Sabha (Council of States), Unstarred Question No. 2956 asked by Mr. C.P. Narayanan, <http://164.100.47.5/qsearch/QResult.aspx>

f. QATAR

13. Admission under Self Financing Scheme for Foreign Students, Doha, 16 December 2012.

Applications are invited from Qatari students for admission to Medical (MBBS), Engineering & Pharmacy Colleges as well as to Diploma courses in Pharmacy and Engineering, under Self Financing Scheme for foreign students for the academic year 2013 – 2014. Application forms are available with the Embassy [Second Secretary (PIC), Tel. No. 44255706, Fax No. 44670448, E-mail: pressofficer@qatar.net.qa

Qualifications:

- (ii) For MBBS course, applicants should have secured a minimum of 60 per cent of the aggregate of marks with at least 60 per cent in Physics, Chemistry and Biology (Zoology & Botany) and 50 per cent in English in the qualifying examination (equivalent to standard 10 + 2 in India).

(iii) For Bachelor of Engineering course: Candidates should have secured a minimum of 60 per cent of the aggregate of marks with at least 60 per cent in Physics, Chemistry and Mathematics and 50 per cent marks in English in the qualifying examination (equivalent to 10 + 2 in India)

(iv) For B. Pharmacy/ Diploma in Pharmacy courses: An applicant must have secured a minimum of 60 per cent of the aggregate of marks with at least 60 per cent in Physics, Chemistry, Biology (Zoology and Botany) and 50 per cent in English in the qualifying examination (equivalent to 10 + 2 in India).

(v) For Diploma in Engineering Course: Candidates must have secured a minimum of 60 per cent marks in Physics, Chemistry and Mathematics and 50 per cent in English in 10th as well as in 12th grade examination.

Documents required to be submitted with application form:-

(i) Three copies of certificates and marks sheets of qualifying examination duly attested by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of the State of Qatar and the Embassy of India, Doha (with English translation).

(ii) Three copies each of passport (first four pages), Birth Certificate and Character certificate from the Head of Institution last attended (with English translation).

(iii) Three copies of recent passport sized photographs.

Foreign students can also apply for nomination pending final declaration of their 10 + 2 examination result. Nomination of such candidate will, however, depend on the availability of seats at the time of receipt of their marks sheets, if they are received within the prescribed time.

General:

(i) Applications forms can be collected from the Embassy till 1 April 2013.

(ii) Applications complete in all respects, should be submitted to the Embassy by 9 April 2013.

(iii) Selected candidates will have to undergo a medical test, including Aids test, on arrival in India.

Source: Embassy of India, Doha, http://www.indianembassyqatar.org/press_release.php

14. Greetings from the President of India to His Highness Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani, the Emir, New Delhi, 18 December 2012.

Your Highness,

On the occasion of the National Day of the State of Qatar, I have great pleasure in extending warm greetings and felicitations on behalf of the Government and the people of India and on my own behalf to Your Highness and to the people of the State of Qatar.

India values its close and mutually beneficial relationship with the State of Qatar. Your Highness' successful visit to India in April 2012 has provided further impetus to our multifaceted engagement. I am confident that our ongoing cooperation across the full spectrum of political, economic and cultural activities will be further strengthened and diversified by us for the mutual benefit of our peoples.

I take this opportunity to convey to Your Highness my best wishes for your personal good health and well-being, as well as for the continued progress and prosperity of the friendly people of the State of Qatar.

Please accept, Your Highness, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Source: Embassy of India, Doha, http://www.indianembassyqatar.org/press_release.php

g. SAUDI ARABIA

15. New consulate in Saudi Arabia, New Delhi, 20 December 2012

Question:

- (a) Whether the Ministry has plans to constitute a new consulate in Saudi Arabia; and
- (b) If so, the details thereof?

Answer

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

- (a) No.
- (b) Does not arise.

Source: Rajya Sabha (Council of States), Unstarred Question No. 2967 asked by Mr. P. Rajeev, <http://164.100.47.5/qsearch/QResult.aspx>

h. TURKEY

16. Opening of Condolence Book, Ankara, 5 December 2012.

With deep regret, this is to inform the sad demise of H.E. Mr. Inder Kumar Gujral, former Prime Minister of India, in New Delhi, on 30 November 2012.

A Condolence Book will be opened in the Chancery (77 Cinnah Caddesi, Cankaya 06680, Ankara) on the 5-6 December 2012 from 1030 hours to 1230 hours as well as from 1430 hours to 1630 hours.

Source: Embassy of India, Ankara, <http://www.indembassy.org.tr/Eklenti/44,opening-of-condolence-book.doc?0>

17. MoU with Turkey, New Delhi, 18 December 2012.

Question:

Will the Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports be pleased to state:-

- (a) Whether the Government of India has signed any Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for enhancing cooperation in the field of sports and youth activities with the Government of Turkey;
- (b) If so, the details thereof;

- (c) The salient features of the said MoU; and
 (d) The extent to which sports and youth activities between the two countries are likely to be benefited after the implementation of the said MoU?

Answer

The Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Youth Affairs and Sports (Jitendra Singh)

(a) to (c) : A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on Cooperation in the field of Sports & Youth Activities has been signed between India and Turkey on 5 June 2012. The said MOU provides the framework within which detailed proposals for programmes of cooperation between the two countries in the field of sports and youth activities are to be considered on the basis of reciprocity and mutual benefit. The MoU provides for cooperation in the form of exchange of programmes, skills, techniques, information and knowledge, in the following fields, among others:

- @ Training and competition of athletes and teams
- @ Training and technical assistance for coaches
- @ Exchange programmes and visits of sports leaders, sports administrators, professionals and experts in the field of youth and sports
- @ Developing joint projects in the field of youth and sports
- @ Fostering youth tourism
- @ Training, exchange and assistance programmes for sports sciences personnel and development of sports sciences etc.

(d) Apart from strengthening bilateral relations between the two countries in the field of sports and youth activities, various activities and exchange programmes undertaken by the two countries under the provisions of MoU will contribute to promotion and development of sports in the two countries.

Source: Lok Sabha (House of the People), Unstarred Question No. 4116 asked by Mr. Kishanbhai Vestabhai Patel and Mr. Pradeep Kumar Majhi, <http://164.100.47.132/LssNew/psearch/QResult15.aspx?qref=133385>

i. UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

18. Accepting applications from citizens of UAE, Abu Dhabi, 6 December 2012.

The Embassy of India, Abu Dhabi and the Consulate General of India, Dubai will be accepting applications from citizens of UAE for admission to Medicine (MBBS), Bachelor of Engineering (BE), Pharmacy (B. Pharmacy)/Diploma in Pharmacy and Diploma in Engineering at Indian educational institutions for the academic year 2013-14 against reserved seats for foreign students. All these are self financing courses tuition fee for which vary from institution to institution and may range between US\$3000 - US\$6000 per annum. The applications are required to be submitted in the prescribed application form, available at the Embassy/Consulate General, along with copies of attested certificates and documents.

The eligibility criteria for various courses are as under:

For admission to MBBS courses : A candidate must have secured a minimum of 60 per cent aggregate marks with at least 60 per cent in Physics, Chemistry and Biology (Botany & Zoology) and 50 per cent in English in the qualifying examination (equivalent to standard 10+2 of CBSE in India).

For B.E. Courses : A candidate must have secured a minimum of 60 per cent aggregate marks with at least 60 per cent in Physics, Chemistry and mathematics and 50 per cent in English in the qualifying examination (equivalent to standard 10+2 of CBSE in India).

For B. Pharmacy / Diploma in Pharmacy course: A candidate must have secured a minimum of 60 per cent aggregate marks with at least 60 per cent in Physics, Chemistry, Biology (Botany & Zoology) and 50 per cent in English in the qualifying examination (equivalent to standard 10+2 of CBSE in India).

For Diploma in Engineering Courses: A candidate must have secured a minimum of 60 per cent aggregate marks with at least 60 per cent in Physics, Chemistry and Mathematics in the first attempt and 50 per cent in English in 10th as well in 12th Grade Examination. For admission to 1st year the age limit should be below 21 years as on 1 January 2013.

Last date of receipt of applications in the Embassy of India, Abu Dhabi and Consulate General of India, Dubai is 5 April 2013.

Source: Embassy of India, Abu Dhabi, <http://www.indembassyuae.org/drupal/node/812>

19. Respect to the departed leader, Abu Dhabi, 12 December 2012.

As a mark of respect to the departed leader, H.E. Mr. Inder Kumar Gujral, former Prime Minister of India a condolence book was opened on 5-6 December, 2012 in Embassy.

Source: Embassy of India, Abu Dhabi, <http://www.indembassyuae.org/drupal/node/818>

20. Bringing back of NRIs from UAE, New Delhi, 13 December 2012.

Question:

Will the Minister of Overseas Indian Affairs be pleased to state:

- (a) Whether the Ministry has taken any steps to bring back the NRIs from UAE, who are there without valid documents, using the special scheme announced by the UAE Government;
- (b) If so, the details thereof; and
- (c) The number of Indians who are expected to be rescued under this scheme?

Answer

Minister of Overseas Indian Affairs (Mr. Vayalar Ravi)

(a), (b) and (c): The Ministry is coordinating with the Indian Mission in the UAE to facilitate the return of non-resident Indians (NRIs) from UAE who are without valid documents. The Indian Mission has taken measures to facilitate issue/update of travel documents and to expedite

completion of exit formalities for illegal Indian residents desirous of availing amnesty announced by the UAE authorities. The number of Indians who are expected to avail the amnesty is not available with the Indian Mission in the UAE.

Source: Rajya Sabha (Council of States), Unstarred Question No. 2238 asked by Mr. K.N. Balagopal, <http://164.100.47.5/qsearch/QResult.aspx>

21. Facilitation for Returning of NRIs from UAE, New Delhi, 13 December 2012.

The Ministry is coordinating with the Indian Mission in the UAE to facilitate the return of non-resident Indians (NRIs) from UAE who are without valid documents. The Indian Mission has taken measures to facilitate issue/update of travel documents and to expedite completion of exit formalities for illegal Indian residents desirous of availing amnesty announced by the UAE authorities. The number of Indians who are expected to avail the amnesty is not available with the Indian Mission in the UAE.

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

Source: Press Information Bureau, New Delhi, <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx?relid=90584>

j. YEMEN

22. Statement by Ambassador Hardeep Singh Puri, Permanent Representative, on Briefing: Yemen at the United Nations Security Council, New York, 4 December 2012.

Thank you, Mr. President.

At the outset, I would like to congratulate you and your delegation on assuming the Presidency of the Security Council for the month of December. I wish you great success in your stewardship of the Council and assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation. I would also like to thank the colleagues for their appreciation of India's presidency last month.

I thank Special Adviser Jamal Benomar for his comprehensive briefing on recent developments in Yemen, including Secretary General's recent visit to Sana'a to mark the anniversary of the signing of the GCC brokered agreement. I would also like to thank the Permanent Representative of Yemen for his valuable statement.

Nearly a year back when the Security Council adopted resolution 2014, Yemen was facing a serious situation on the political, security, and humanitarian fronts. On the one hand, Yemeni people's aspirations for democratic transformation and stable and secure future were thwarted due to divisions among the political class. On the other, extremists and terrorist groups, some linked with the Al Qaeda, were expanding their presence in various parts of the country, particularly in the south. Clashes among various factions of the military led to the death of several hundred Yemenis.

By virtue of the unanimous support of the international community, anchored in the Security Council, the efforts of the GCC succeeded in the signing of an agreement between the main Yemeni parties. It is a great tribute to the Yemeni people and their leadership that the country is making steady progress in the implementation of the transition agreement.

We commend President Hadi, whose leadership of the transition process has made immense contribution in turning the situation of despair into the hope of a stable, secure, democratic and prosperous Yemen. We also would like to congratulate Yemeni people for their determination to resolve current challenges through inclusive Yemeni-led political processes. India stands by the people and Government of Yemen in their journey towards a stable, secure, prosperous, and democratic future.

Despite significant progress made during the last one year, Yemen continues to face multiple political, security, economic and humanitarian challenges. The political situation remains delicate. The political parties and regional stakeholders are yet to overcome differences over important issues, including transitional justice and reconciliation. The fragility of the situation has compounded the humanitarian situation affecting nearly 10 million Yemenis.

Al Qaeda and affiliated militant groups continue to carry out attacks against government institutions and officials. The tribal militias also continue hostilities in the southern and northern parts of Yemen. We strongly condemn all terrorist acts and violence in Yemen, and urge all groups to lay down their arms and join the political process to address their grievances. We also fully support Yemen's political independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity.

We call upon the international community to continue its assistance to the Government of Yemen in its fight against terrorist groups and in its efforts to stabilize the security situation.

We have noted that the Yemeni government has taken several important initiatives to restructure the armed forces, appoint a new electoral commission, and resume economic activities. The preparatory committee for the National Dialogue Conference is engaged in a serious and inclusive dialogue among all stakeholders, and is in its final stages of work. Political parties are actively engaged in dialogue to resolve differences over draft law on Transitional Justice and National Reconciliation. We hope that the National Dialogue Conference will ensure the involvement of all stakeholders, including youth and women groups, al Houthis, the southern movement, and civil society. We also hope that these initiatives will pave the way for holding the referendum on the constitution in 2013 and elections in the beginning of 2014 as envisaged in the transition agreement.

India has a long and historical relationship with Yemen. We have partnered with Yemen in humanitarian, human resources development and capacity building areas. In addition to its engagement under the Friends of Yemen Group, India would be happy to look at specific proposals for cooperation from Government of Yemen, particularly in the field of training,

capacity building, entrepreneurship development, small and medium enterprises, education and information technology within the bilateral cooperation arrangements. India has also provided consignment of rice worth of US \$ 2 million and would be sending very soon, another consignment of wheat worth the same amount. In addition, India would also be supplying medicines worth US \$ 2 million to Yemen.

India also stands ready to offer concessional Lines of Credit (LOCs) for projects and programmes considered urgent and necessary by Yemen under the umbrella of credit lines for the LDCs. The Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation (IOR-ARC) provides another framework for India's cooperation with Yemen.

In conclusion, let me reiterate that the continuing support of the international community is crucial to Yemen as it consolidates the gains that have been made during the last year. We 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.

I thank you.

Source: Permanent Mission of India to the United Nations, New York,

<http://www.un.int/india/2012/ind2148.pdf>

SPECIFIC ISSUES

k. OVERSAEAS INDIANS

23. Steps to address overseas Indians' issues, New Delhi, 5 December 2012.

The cases of employer-employee disputes are received from time to time with complaints of non-payment/delayed payment or underpayment of salaries, non-renewal of visa and labour card on time, unsatisfactory living conditions including sub-standard food at the camp site, refusal to pay for the medical treatment of the worker, denial of leave and air ticket to the hometown on completion of 2 years period of contract, physical assault/sexual harassment, etc. Information in this regard has been received from Embassy of India, Riyadh, Kuwait, Muscat (Oman) and Consulate General of India, Jeddah for the last three years as follows:

| Country | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 |
|-------------|-------|-------|-------|
| EOI, Riyadh | 3,139 | 2,330 | 2,359 |
| EOI, Jeddah | 2,111 | 1,326 | 1,243 |
| Kuwait | 4,373 | 2,854 | 2,978 |
| Oman | 2,262 | 2,789 | 2,183 |

The Government has taken several steps to address the issue of Indian emigrants, which include:

- (i) The Ministry has notified the Emigration (Amendment) Rules 2009 on 9 July 2009 revising the eligibility criteria of Recruiting Agents (RAs), enhancing their recruiting capacity and increasing the security amount and service charges.
- (ii) National Awareness-cum-Publicity Campaigns are carried out regularly to create wider awareness among the general public and particularly among the potential migrants on the risks of illegal migration and safeguards against illegal practices by unauthorized intermediaries and fraudulent recruiting agencies.
- (iii) The Ministry has set up the Indian Community Welfare Fund (ICWF) in all Countries for providing onsite support and financial assistance to Indian workers in distress.
- (iv) An Overseas Workers Resource Centre (OWRC), with a 24X7 helpline supported by eight regional languages assists emigrants/emigrants intending to go abroad for employment to 17 notified Emigration Clearance Required (ECR) countries.
- (v) India has signed over the recent years Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) with United Arab Emirates, (UAE), Kuwait, Oman, Malaysia and Bahrain. Additional Protocol to an existing agreement with Qatar has also been signed.

These MOUs enhance bilateral co-operation in management of migration and protection of labour welfare. Under these MOUs a Joint Working Group (JWG) has been constituted that meets regularly in order to resolve bilateral labour issues.

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

Source: Press Information Bureau, New Delhi,

<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx?relid=90017>

24. Agreements for Welfare of Overseas Indian Workers, New Delhi, 12 December 2012.

The Government has signed bilateral Memorandum of Understanding on manpower with following countries:

- (i) UAE
- (ii) Qatar
- (iii) Oman
- (iv) Malaysia
- (v) Bahrain
- (vi) Kuwait
- (vii) Jordan

Source: Press Information Bureau, New Delhi,

<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx?relid=90493>

25. Complaints from Overseas Indian Workers, New Delhi, 13 December 2012.

Complaints from Indian workers pertaining to contractual violations, viz., non-payment of salaries, long working hours, inadequate living conditions, physical harassment, refusal of leave or 'exit/re-entry permits' 'final exit visa', medical benefits, air tickets etc. are received from time to time.

The Complaints pertaining to the Gulf Countries during the last three years are furnished below.

| Country | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 (up to Nov.) |
|------------------------------------|------|------|-------------------|
| Bahrain | 1384 | 1163 | 812 |
| Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia | 3139 | 2330 | 2547 |
| Kuwait | 4373 | 2854 | 3228 |
| Oman | 2262 | 2789 | 2183 |
| Qatar | 3034 | 3186 | 3087 |
| Abu Dhabi, United Arab of Emirates | 1036 | 1588 | 491 |

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

Source: Press Information Bureau, New Delhi,

<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx?relid=90585>

I. NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT

26. Statement by Ambassador Hardeep Singh Puri, Permanent Representative, in his capacity as Coordinator of the NAM Caucus in the Security Council, New York, 18 December 2012.

The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Caucus in the Security Council expresses its grave concern regarding the continuing illegal Israeli settlement activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem.

NAM condemns the recent provocative announcements by Israel, the occupying Power, to construct 3,000 settlement units on confiscated Palestinian land in an area East of Occupied East Jerusalem, now widely known as the so-called "E-1" plan, in addition to declarations

regarding the construction of another 3,600 settlement units. NAM stresses that Israel's settlement activities constitute grave breaches of international humanitarian law and violate numerous United Nations resolutions, including resolutions of the Security Council. This issue also remains the foremost obstacle to peace, impairing the all efforts to revive credible peace negotiations aimed at bringing an end to the Israeli occupation that began in 1967 and achieving a just, lasting and comprehensive peace.

It is widely acknowledged that Israeli settlement activities undermine the contiguity, integrity, viability and unity of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and jeopardize the prospects for physically achieving the two-State solution based on the pre-1967 borders. Settlement activities and illegal actions by extremist Israeli settlers are also causing extensive physical, economic and social devastation throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

NAM rejects these illegal actions, which have deliberately intensified after the international community's reaffirmation of its support for the two-State solution with the General Assembly's adoption of resolution 67/19, which, inter alia, accorded to Palestine the status of non-member Observer State in the United Nations. NAM calls on Israel to immediately cease its settlement activities and to abide by all of its legal obligations. The NAM Caucus in the Security Council will continue to call for the Council to uphold its Charter responsibility towards the maintenance of international peace and security, including with regard to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Today, NAM also calls on the parties to return to the path of peace on the basis of the longstanding terms of reference of the peace process, including relevant Security Council resolutions, for the achievement of a just and lasting final settlement.

Source: Permanent Mission of India to the United Nations, New York,
<http://www.un.int/india/2012/ind2161.pdf>

m. TWO-STATE SOLUTION

27. IBSA statement on Israeli Settlement and the Two-State solution at the Security Council Press Take out area, New York, 19 December 2012.

India, Brazil and South Africa reiterate their grave concern regarding the Israeli settlement policy in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, including East Jerusalem.

The IBSA countries condemn the recent announcement of the construction of the so-called "E-1" area and other settlement constructions in the Palestinian Territory, which jeopardize the prospects for a two-State solution.

In this regard, the IBSA countries believe that continuing settlement activities by Israel is not only illegal under international law but also a major obstacle to peace efforts.

We reiterate our call on Israel to stop settlement activities. Freezing settlement construction is, however, not enough. Settlements must be dismantled and the occupation must end. This is not a concession to be made in the course of negotiations, but rather an obligation as per various resolutions of the Security Council and International Law.

We condemn the violence by settlers against Palestinians and their property. Action is required against those indulging in such violence. We are also deeply disturbed by evictions, demolitions of Palestinian homes and other measures that alter the realities on the ground.

The IBSA countries believe the Security Council has an essential, irreplaceable role to play in the peace process. The promotion of peace in the Middle East is in the interest of all members of the United Nations and cannot be delegated to third parties. The Security Council can contribute by calling for a complete halt to settlement activity, calling for the implementation of its own resolutions and receiving regular reports by the Quartet on progress achieved or lack thereof.

The granting of Observer State status to Palestine by the General Assembly, with unequivocal support, made it clear that there is no alternative to the two-State solution in the quest for peace in the Middle East. The IBSA countries call on both sides to resume negotiations on the pending issues, with a view to the prompt realization of the two-State solution, with a cohesive, secure, democratic and economically viable Palestinian State, living side by side in peace and security with the State of Israel.

Source: Permanent Mission of India to the United Nations, New York,
<http://www.un.int/india/2012/ind2162.pdf>

n. HAJJ

28. Complaints from Hajj pilgrims, New Delhi, 6 December 2012.

Question:

- (a) Whether more than 1.25 lakh Hajj pilgrims proceed for Hajj every year from India under the management of Hajj Committee of India;
- (b) Whether Government is aware of the large number of complaints from Hajj pilgrims regarding unsatisfactory travel and accommodation arrangements for them at Mecca and Medina;
- (c) If so, the remedial steps Government would take to remove the grievances of Hajj pilgrims;
- (d) Whether Government proposes to accept the demands of the Muslim community to establish a Hajj Corporation in place of the Hajj Committee of India; and
- (e) If so, the details thereof?

Answer:

The Minister of External Affairs (Mr. Salman Khurshid)

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

STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PARTS (A) TO (E) OF RAJYA SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO. 187 REGARDING "COMPLAINTS FROM HAJJ PILGRIMS" FOR ANSWER ON 06.12.2012

(a) Yes, Sir. 125,000 Hajj seats were allocated to Hajj Committee of India annually since 2010 and around the same number performed Hajj.

(b) & (c) Yes, Sir. Some complaints were received during Hajj-2012. Issues raised therein were dealt with promptly in consultation with the stake holders concerned. A comprehensive remedial system is in place to redress complaints of pilgrims. An on-line system has also been introduced effective this year at the Consulate General of India, Jeddah to address complaints. The entire Hajj process was planned carefully and problems envisaged and appropriate remedies were built into the preparations for Hajj-2012. It is the constant endeavour of Government of India to keep learning from the experience of all stake holders in successive Hajj pilgrimages and make improvements with a view to provide the pilgrims with better facilities.

(d) No, Sir.

(e). Does not arise

Source: Rajya Sabha (Council of States), Starred Question No. 187 asked by Mr. Ahmad Saeed Malihabadi, <http://164.100.47.5/qsearch/QResult.aspx>

29. Hajj seats on recommendation of MPs, New Delhi, 6 December 2012.

Question:

- (a) The details of Government's Hajj quota this year;
- (b) The number of seats that have been allotted to hajj pilgrims on the recommendations of Members of Parliament (MPs);
- (c) The maximum and minimum number of seats allotted on the recommendation of various MPs; and
- (d) The steps taken/being taken by Government to make the allotment of Government Hajj quota just and transparent?

Answer

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

(a) As per bilateral Hajj agreement between Governments of India and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the quota allocated to India for Hajj-2012 was 1, 70,000 with 1,25,000 to go through the Hajj Committee of India (HCOI) and 45,000 through Private Tour Operators (PTOs).

(b) & (c) No Hajj seats quota has been fixed specifically for Hon'ble Members of Parliament. However, Hon'ble Members of Parliament can make recommendations to dignitaries who have been accorded specific quota as per the interim order dated 23 July 2012 of the Hon'ble Supreme Court. The interim order provides for the discretionary Hajj quota of the Government at 500 seats comprising 200 for the Hajj Committee of India (HCOI) and 300 for the recommendations of dignitaries limited to the following:

Hon'ble President of India 100 seats

Hon'ble Vice-President 75 seats

Hon'ble Prime Minister 75 seats

Hon'ble External Affairs Minister 50 seats

(d) Allocation to each State/Union Territory (UT) is done by HCOI in proportion to population of Muslims in the State/UT vis-à-vis the national population of Muslims as per 2001 Census. The surplus seats, available from States/UTs which receive less number of applications than their allotted quota, are distributed to States / UTs with excess demand and in proportion to the Muslim population. The information on allocation of Hajj seats is freely accessible on HCOI's website. The cancellations are adjusted against the waiting list on first cancelled seat to first waitlisted applicant basis, which can also be freely accessed on HCOI's website.

Source: Rajya Sabha (Council of States), Unstarred Question No. 1414 asked by Mr. Aayanur Manjunatha, <http://164.100.47.5/qsearch/QResult.aspx>

30. Hajj Subsidy, New Delhi, 12 December 2012.

Question:

Will the Minister of Civil Aviation be pleased to state:-

- (a) Whether the Supreme Court has directed the Union Government to gradually abolish Hajj subsidy;
- (b) If so, the details thereof along with the reaction of the Union Government thereto;
- (c) Whether the Supreme Court has also directed the Government to use the money for the benefit of the community; and
- (d) If so, the action contemplated by the Government in this regard?

Answer

Minister of State in the Ministry of Civil Aviation (K.C. Venugopal)

(a): Yes, Madam.

(b), (c) and (d): The Hon'ble Supreme Court vide its interim order dated 8 May 2012 has directed the Central Government to progressively reduce the amount of Hajj subsidy so as to completely eliminate it within a period of 10 years from that day. The Hon'ble Court has also said that the subsidy money may be more profitably used for upliftment of the community in education and other indices of social development. The Government is conscious of the rising subsidy cost and is taking measures to reduce the same. Pilgrims contribution to the Hajj air fare is being progressively increased.

Source: Lok Sabha (House of the People), Unstarred Question No. 3209 asked by Mr. S. Ramasubbu and Kamla Devi Patle,

<http://164.100.47.132/LssNew/psearch/QResult15.aspx?qref=133090>

31. Private tour operators for Hajj, New Delhi, 12 December 2012.

Question:

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

- (a) The number of pilgrims who performed hajj during the current year under Government quota and private tour operators' quota, State-wise;
- (b) Whether the Government has denied private tour operators in Maharashtra their quota and if so, the reasons therefore;
- (c) Whether the same logic was applied in accepting/denying such quota for other States and if so, the details thereof; and
- (d) The stand of the Government in regard to allocating quota to private tour operators in future?

Answer

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

(a) 1,25,064 pilgrims performed Hajj through Hajj Committee of India (HCOI) and 47,980 through Private Tour Operators (PTOs) during Hajj-2012. State-wise details are attached at Annexure I & II. As per the interim order dated 23 July 2012 of the Hon'ble Supreme Court, the discretionary Hajj quota of the Government was fixed at 500 seats.

(b) & (c) No. The 2012 Hajj PTO Policy was formulated taking into account the cumulative experience of all stake holders including the PTOs. Hajj seats were allocated to the qualified PTOs in accordance with the Hajj PTO 2012 policy. The Policy and the allocation of seats to PTOs as per the Policy were approved by the Hon'ble Supreme Court.

(d) As per latest directions of the Hon'ble Supreme Court, the draft PTO Policy for Hajj-2013 is to be submitted in the Court shortly.

For the annexure: <http://164.100.47.132/Annexure/lsg15/12/au3108.htm>

Source: Lok Sabha (House of the People), Unstarred Question No. 3108 asked by Mr. Sameer Bhujbal, <http://164.100.47.132/LssNew/psearch/QResult15.aspx?qref=132091>

32. Restrictions on Hajj Pilgrimage, New Delhi, 19 December 2012.

Question:

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

- (a) Whether the Government is planning to restrict Hajj Pilgrimage to only once in lifetime for an individual;
- (b) If so, the details thereof;
- (c) Whether objections in this regard have come up from any quarters; and
- (d) If so, the details thereof?

Answer

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

(a) & (b) Yes. As per the directions of the Hon'ble Supreme Court, an Affidavit was filed in the Supreme Court on 12 April 2012 regarding Hajj policy for Hajj-2012, wherein it was stated that the number of pilgrimages to a Hajj applicant through the Hajj Committee of India (HCOI) be restricted to "once in a life time" as against the existing "once in five years". This will ensure that applicants who have never performed Hajj will get the benefit of performing Hajj through HCOI.

(c) No.

(d) Does not arise.

Source: Lok Sabha (House of the People), Unstarred Question No. 4172 asked by Mr. Sai Prathap Annayyagari, <http://164.100.47.132/LssNew/psearch/QResult15.aspx?qref=133328>

33. Threat to Hajj Committee of India, New Delhi, 19 December 2012.

Question:

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

(a) Whether the Hajj Committee of India (HCOI), Mumbai received an anonymous threat call recently;

(b) If so, the details thereof; and

(c) The manner in which the situation was handled and security ensured at HCOI?

Answer

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

(a) & (b) Yes. An anonymous threat call stating that anything could happen in the Hajj House building between 1-10 October 2012 was received in the Hajj Committee of India (HCOI), Mumbai on 29 September 2012 between 1800 hours to 1815 hours.

(c) The matter was immediately reported to the Commissioner of Police, the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) (Zone-I) and the Assistant Commissioner of Police (ACP), Security Branch, M.R.A. Marg, Mumbai. The ACP and the DCP visited the Hajj House on 1 October 2012 and discussed the safety issues of the Hajj House building with the Chief Executive Officer, HCOI. HCOI made the necessary arrangements to enhance the security of the Hajj house building as per suggestions of the Police authorities. In response to HCOI's request for an increase in the number of Security personnel including Lady Security officials, additional Police Force was provided during Hajj season-2012. A separate parking arrangement was also provided to the pilgrims and the visitors outside the Hajj House building with the help of the Police. No untoward incidents took place in the Hajj House, as threatened by the unknown call received on 29 September, 2012.

Source: Lok Sabha (House of the People), Unstarred Question No. 4222 asked by Mr. Abdulrahman, <http://164.100.47.132/LssNew/psearch/QResult15.aspx?qref=133333>

34. Hajj Quota, New Delhi, 19 December 2012

Question:

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

(a) The norms/criteria adopted by the Government to distribute Hajj Quota among the States;

(b) the details of Hajj Quota allocated to the private tour operators for Hajj-2012, State-wise and the basis on which Hajj Quota is distributed to tour operators throughout the country;

(c) Whether MPs have been demanding an increase in their present quota from the existing two to ten and if so, the details thereof;

(d) Whether the Government proposes to request Saudi Arabia authorities for increasing the Hajj Quota as per the latest census figures; and

(e) If so, the details thereof?

Answer

The Minister of External Affairs (Salman Khurshid)

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

STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PARTS (A) TO (E) OF LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO. 378 REGARDING `HAJ QUOTA` FOR ANSWER ON 19 December 2012

(a) Allocation of Hajj seats to each State/Union Territory is done by the Hajj Committee of India (HCOI) in proportion to the Muslim population in each State/Union Territory vis-à-vis the national population of Muslims as per 2001 Census.

(b) As per bilateral Hajj Agreement between Governments of India and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the quota allocated to India for Hajj-2012 was 1, 70,000 with 1, 25,000 through the Hajj Committee of India (HCOI) and 45,000 through Private Tour Operators (PTOs). Hajj Quota to PTOs is not allocated State-wise.

The 2012 Hajj PTO Policy was formulated taking into account the cumulative experience of all stake holders including the PTOs. Hajj seats were allocated to PTOs qualified under the Hajj PTO 2012 policy. The PTO 2012 Policy and the allocation of seats to PTOs qualified under the Policy were also approved by the Hon'ble Supreme Court.

(c) No Hajj seat quota has been fixed specifically for Hon'ble Members of Parliament. However, they can make recommendations to dignitaries who have been accorded specific quota in the interim Order dated 23 July 2012 of the Hon'ble Supreme Court. The interim Order provides for the discretionary quota of 500 hajj seats - 200 for the Hajj Committee of India (HCOI) and 300 for the recommendations of dignitaries limited to the following:

| | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|
| Hon'ble President of India | 100 seats |
| Hon'ble Vice-President | 75 seats |
| Hon'ble Prime Minister | 75 seats |
| Hon'ble External Affairs Minister | 50 seats |

(d) Latest census figures are not yet available.

(e) Does not arise.

Source: Lok Sabha (House of the People), Starred Question no. 378 asked by Mr. Sameer Bhujbal, <http://164.100.47.132/LssNew/psearch/QResult15.aspx?qref=133324>

35. Threat to Hajj Committee, New Delhi, 20 December 2012.

Question:

(a) Whether an anonymous threat was given to the Hajj Committee in Mumbai to cause damage between 1-10 October 2012;

(b) If so, the details in this regard; and

(c) The results of the investigations made in the matter and steps taken for proper protection?

Answer

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

(a) & (b) Yes. An anonymous threat call stating that anything could happen in the Hajj House building between 1-10 October 2012 was received in the Hajj Committee of India (HCOI), Mumbai on 29 September 2012 between 1800 hours to 1815 hours.

(c) The matter was immediately reported to the Commissioner of Police, the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) (Zone-I) and the Assistant Commissioner of Police (ACP), Security Branch, M.R.A. Marg, Mumbai. The ACP and the DCP visited the Hajj House on 1 October 2012 and discussed the safety issues of the Hajj House building with the Chief Executive Officer, HCOI. HCOI made the necessary arrangements to enhance the security of the Hajj house building as per suggestions of the Police authorities. In response to HCOI's request for an increase in the number of Security personnel including Lady Security officials, additional Police Force was provided during Hajj season-2012. A separate parking arrangement was also provided to the pilgrims and the visitors outside the Hajj House building with the help of the Police. No untoward incidents took place in the Hajj House, as threatened by the unknown call received on 29 September 2012.

Source: Rajya Sabha (Council of States), Unstarred Question No. 2957 asked by Mr. Mohammed Adeep, <http://164.100.47.5/qsearch/QResult.aspx>

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 Websites <http://rajyasabha.nic.in/> of Rajya Sabha and <http://loksabha.nic.in/> of Lok Sabha.

Ten Lakhs= one million

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