

# **INDIA SPEAKS**

(Monthly Digest of Official Indian Statements on Middle East)

**No. 44**

**March 2013**

## **BILATERAL ISSUES**

### **a. EGYPT**

#### **1. Indian Company Signed contract with Cairo Company for Electricity Production (CEPC), Cairo, 3 February 2013.**

An Indian company Dee Development Engineers Limited (DEE) signed a contract with Cairo Company for Electricity Production (CEPC) to execute projects for setting up Combined Cycle Power Plant at Giza North at a ceremony held at the Egyptian Ministry of Electricity and Energy premises in Nasr City.

The contract was signed by K. L. Bansal, Chairman & Managing Director of Dee Development Engineers Ltd and Eng. Aly Hassan, Chairman of Cairo Company for Electricity Production. The signing ceremony was witnessed by Minister of Electricity and Energy Ahmad Mostafa Emam Shaaban, Navdeep Suri, Ambassador of India and Eng. Gaber Desouky, Chairman of Egyptian Electricity Holding Company (EEHC) and other senior officials.

Dee Development Engineers Limited (DEE), a leading Indian company in the Pre-Fabricated Piping Industry has won an international contract for “critical piping and valves” of Giza North Power Plant from Cairo Electric Production Company (CEPC) against stiff global competition. Cairo Electric Production Company (CEPC) is setting up 1500 MW Combined Cycle Power Plant at Giza North. The US \$ 20 million contract includes furnishing, fabrication and delivery of critical piping and valves for pressure and temperature rating for Giza Combined Cycle Power Project and on-site technical assistance. Power Generation Engineering and Services Company (PGESCO) is the engineering consultant & the project is being financed by African Development Bank (ADB).

Dee Development Engineers is a leading international engineering enterprise offering a single source solution for Pre-Fabricated Piping Systems having application in Power and Process Plants. The product offerings of DEE include design, engineering & manufacturing and supply of Prefabricated Piping Systems. DEE Development Engineers Limited is the largest private sector player in the Indian Pre-Fabricated Piping Industry and ranks among the top ten in the world in terms of capacity. DEE is also the market leader in India for Super Critical Piping.

*Source: Embassy of India, Cairo, [http://www.indembcairo.com/en-us/presscentre/pressreleases.aspx?udt\\_656\\_param\\_detail=355](http://www.indembcairo.com/en-us/presscentre/pressreleases.aspx?udt_656_param_detail=355)*

## **2. Prize distribution ceremony of the poster design contest themed “Did you sense the spirit of Gandhi in Tahrir Square” Sunday, 24 February 2013, Cairo, 17 February 2013.**

The Embassy of India in Cairo in cooperation with the Artistic Creativity Centre will be holding a prizes distribution ceremony and an art exhibition on 24 February 2013, Sunday at 1400 hours. The exhibition consists of a symbolic number of colourful poster designs from India, Egypt and other African countries received by the Embassy for a poster design contest themed “Did you sense the spirit of Gandhi in Tahrir Square?”, which was launched earlier on 20 October 2012, the birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, the father of the Indian nation. The Guest of honour Khaled El Nabawy, Egyptian renowned actor and Navdeep Suri, Ambassador of India will be addressing the ceremony.

The contest was open for youth from Egypt, India and other African countries. The jury, which included Head of Fine Arts Sector Dr. Salah El Meleigy, artist Mohamed Ablah and Director of a leading design firm 'the Ideaworks', Sudhir Horo, received 84 entries for the adult section and 37 entries for the children's section.

A prize distribution ceremony will be held at the Artistic Creativity Centre on 27 January 2013. As the Chief Guest, famous Egyptian actor Khaled El Nabawi will give a speech at the ceremony. For more information, kindly contact the press office at 23925162, 23925243, E: mail [infoemb@indembcairo.com](mailto:infoemb@indembcairo.com).

*Source: Embassy of India, Cairo, [http://www.indembcairo.com/en-us/presscentre/pressreleases.aspx?udt\\_656\\_param\\_detail=356](http://www.indembcairo.com/en-us/presscentre/pressreleases.aspx?udt_656_param_detail=356)*

## **3. Governor of Qena Adel Labib: South-South Cooperation should be given priority, Cairo, 21 February 2013.**

Under the outreach programme initiated by the Indian Embassy to interact with Egyptians in various governorates, Ambassador of India to Egypt Navdeep Suri visited Qena Governorate in Upper Egypt on 18 February 2013. Suri called on the Governor of Qena Major General Adel Labib and they discussed means to enhance relations between India and Qena Governorate. Governor Adel Labib briefed Ambassador Suri on the potentials and advantages that can attract Indian investors to the Governorate.

He also identified possible areas of joint investments, such as mining, agriculture, water pumps and sugar plants. The Governor said that other advantages can be given to the Indian investors in the two industrial areas located in Qena; Qeft and Naga' Ham'adi. Governor Labib also highlighted the unique geographical location of Qena, which is located few kilometres away from Safaga port. So, it can be used as a hub for targeting markets in the Gulf region.

On his part, Ambassador Suri informed the Governor of the various training courses offered by India to Egypt and other friendly developing countries under the ITEC programme, a flagship initiative launched by India in 1964 as a bilateral programme of assistance. "Under the ITEC, India offers 100 slots for Egypt, some of which can be availed by Qena Governorate through coordination with the Egyptian Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation to promote the skills of the civil servants at the Governorate," Ambassador Suri said.

At South Valley University, the Governor, Ambassador Suri and the President of South Valley University jointly inaugurated a photo exhibition giving glimpses of the course of the Indo-Egyptian relations starting from Gandhi's stop in Port Said en route to London in 1931. A new feature was added to the exhibition this time were commercial panels displaying the Indian companies investing in various locations in Egypt.

In his speech in the University, Governor Adel Labib underscored the champion role played by both India and Egypt in founding the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) to defend the issues of the developing countries and enhance South-South cooperation, which should be given priority today. Dr. Abbas Mansour, the President of South Valley University said that he is very happy to host the days of Indian culture at the university, as this is a good opportunity for the students to know more about the Indian culture and the deeply-rooted relations between India and Egypt. In addition, Dr. Abbas called for benefiting from India's experience in the field of small-scale enterprises.

In his remarks, Ambassador Suri reviewed the gamut of bilateral relations between India and Egypt. He highlighted the growing trajectory in trade exchange between the two countries. "I am highly impressed by the cleanness and infrastructure facilities in Qena Governorate," Ambassador Suri added. With regard to small-scale enterprises, Ambassador Suri announced that an agreement is expected to be signed between the National Small Industries Corporation Limited and the Social Fund for Development of Egypt.

Members of the Indian Culture Centre presented fashion show of various Indian Saris and also Indian dance items. In addition, several folk dance items, including Tanura, were presented by a group of students from South Valley University.

At the end of the visit, Ambassador Suri and Governor Labib met with members of the business community of Qena to discuss the possible investment opportunities in Qena. Ambassador Suri said to the businessmen, "I also call on the businessmen of Qena to think of investing in India, a

huge market of 1.2 billion people.” Ambassador Suri and the Governor of Qena agreed that this visit would just pave the way for more other visits in the future to discuss in details other aspects of cooperation between the two sides in various domains.

*Source: Embassy of India, Cairo, [http://www.indembaicairo.com/en-us/presscentre/pressreleases.aspx?udt\\_656\\_param\\_detail=406](http://www.indembaicairo.com/en-us/presscentre/pressreleases.aspx?udt_656_param_detail=406)*

#### **4. Alexandria University student wins a trip to India Prizes distributed to the winners and participants of the poster competition themed “Did you sense the spirit of Gandhi in Tahrir Square?”, Cairo, 25 February 2013.**

At the prize distribution ceremony for the poster design competition “Did you sense the spirit of Gandhi in Tahrir Square?” organized jointly by the Embassy of India in Cairo and the Artistic Creativity Centre, a clearly delighted Ahmed Aba Ya Zeed, the winner of the special grand prize, said he is excited about his trip to India. The other winners in the competition include Amre Sha’lan (first prize winner), Youssef Da’moum (second prize winner) and Rehab Ahmed Gouda (third prize winner) in the adults’ category of the competition. In the school’s section, Mazen Abdallah Ali bagged the first prize, while the second was won by Zeinab Hossam El Din. The third prize was shared by two children: Raghda Moataz Mohamed and Sarah Ragab Hussein, who were awarded the same marks by the jury members of the competition.

The ceremony was held at the Artistic Creativity Centre, Cairo Opera House Complex on 24 February 2013 and certificates of participation were distributed to all the 37 participants in the children’s category and 56 participants in the adults’ category. Famous Egyptian actor Khaled El Nabawi, Eng. Mohamed Abu Saeda, Head of Sector of Cultural Development Fund and renowned Egyptian Artist Mohamed Abla and Ambassador of India to Egypt Navdeep Suri were among the dignitaries, who graced the function.

The function started with a two minutes’ silence for the martyrs of the 25 January revolution. In his opening remarks, Ambassador Suri praised the initiative taken by artist Mohamed Abla for hosting the winner of the grand prize from India for one week at Fayoum Arts Centre, which he founded. “The winner of the grand prize from Egypt will meet the winner of the grand prize from India and he will spend a week at the National Institute of Design in Ahmadabad. He will also visit Gandhi Ashram in Ahmadabad,” Ambassador Suri said.

Actor Khaled El Nabawi began his speech with a famous quote from Gandhi and said “first they ignore you, then they laugh at you, then they attack you and finally you win.” The quote, he said, which was often seen in Tahrir square, inspired him and the revolution of 25 January. He also spoke on how the revolution of Egypt impressed the world and left a landmark in modern history.

In his speech, Eng. Mohamed Abu Saeda hailed the initiative on the poster-design contest and its significant role in linking the minds of Egyptian and Indian youth. He also called for considering holding this competition on an annual basis. On his part, artist Mohamed Abla highly appreciated

the entries, which fantastically reflect Gandhi's idea of non-violence and the peaceful nature of the Egyptian revolution.

Speaking on winning the grand prize, Ahmed Hassan said, "The 7 day trip to India will give me a good opportunity to see the National Institute of Design in Ahmadabad, interact with the winner from India and think of joint projects in the field of art and design. In addition, I will attend workshops there. Peacefulness was a common feature between the Egyptian revolution and Gandhi's nonviolence." The winner of the first prize (adults' section) Amre Sha'lan said, "The competition was a good opportunity to channelize our potentials and energy." Mazen Abdallah, winner of the first prize (school's section) said, "Gandhi is the symbol of peace. There is no way to peace, peace is the way." Recounting her memories about her participation in a similar competition, Zeinab Hossam El Din, winner of the second prize (school's section), said, "I participated earlier in "Glimpses of India" painting competition (annual competition organized by the Indian Embassy in Cairo) and won a silver medal and I am happy that I won the second prize in this competition.

*Source: Embassy of India, Cairo, [http://www.indembcairo.com/en-us/presscentre/pressreleases.aspx?udt\\_656\\_param\\_detail=432](http://www.indembcairo.com/en-us/presscentre/pressreleases.aspx?udt_656_param_detail=432)*

### **5. Education Minister of Egypt Dr. Ibrahim Ghoneim inaugurates the launch of Educomp smart-class in Cairo on 25 February 2013, Cairo, 28 February 2013.**

India's largest education company Educomp launched a pilot of its globally renowned digital classroom program Educomp smart-class at Naquib Mahfouz Experimental School, Shoubra, Cairo. This is the first of its kind of pilot project in Egypt. The pilot project has been launched in association with Inspire Egypt, exclusive partner of Educomp in Egypt, and will aim to introduce the students of the school to the wonders of digital learning.

Dr. Tarek El-Tobely, CEO Inspire Egypt made introductions and gave details about the pilots and explained how as an exclusive partner of Educomp in Egypt, Inspire is bringing popular education solutions to Egypt. He explained that "Inspire provides educational solutions using education technology and e-learning in ways that are compatible with Egyptian curriculum.

Dr. Ibrahim Ghoneim, Minister of Education, Government of Egypt formally inaugurated the pilot project in the school. Minister praised the solution and said, "It's very important that using technology in education should add value in the classroom." Ghomenin confirmed that the ministry has approved applying this program in three experimental schools and three excellence schools.

Navdeep Suri, Indian Ambassador to Egypt was also present on the occasion to lend support on behalf of the Indian Embassy to the program. Ambassador Suri explained that "In India solutions like Educomp smart-class have made a tremendous impact. This will help fill the gap for quality education to help teachers ensure minimum quality standards to ensure that students understand tough concepts." Also at the launch was Dr. Reda Mosaad, Head of General Education Sector,

Eng. Adly El Kazzaz – Head of Technology Development and Information Center Manager, Mr. Sameer Hassan – General Manager of Educational Computer Unit, Dr. Mohamed Abou Rezka – Head of Funding of Projects, Deputy Minister of Education in Al-Qalubiya Governorate.

Soumya Kanti, President Educomp Global said, “We are extremely excited to launch the very first Smart-class in Egypt. It is a matter of great honour for Educomp to work on this prestigious pilot project with the Government of Egypt under the dynamic leadership of Dr. Ibrahim Ghoneim. We hope that going forward we can take the benefits of digital learning to large number of students across Egypt”.

**Source:** *Embassy of India, Cairo*, [http://www.indembcairo.com/en-us/presscentre/pressreleases.aspx?udt\\_656\\_param\\_detail=434](http://www.indembcairo.com/en-us/presscentre/pressreleases.aspx?udt_656_param_detail=434)

## b. IRAN

### 6. Ban on import of Urea from Iran, New Delhi, 22 February 2013.

#### Question:

- (a) Whether it is a fact that India has been importing urea from Iran for the last so many years;
- (b) Is so, the details of imports of urea from Iran during the last three years, year-wise and quantity-wise;
- (c) Whether it is also a fact that India has banned import of urea from Iran vide its April 2012 tender; and
- (d) If so, the reasons therefore?

#### 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 (Srikant Kumar Jena)

- a) & (b): Yes Sir. The year-wise urea imports from Iran on Government account during the last three years and current year (up to 15 February, 2013) are as under:-

Year	Quantity (in Lakh MT)
2009-2010	2.76
2010-2011	11.13
2011-2012	19.97
2012-2013 (Up to 15.02.2013)	15.71

- (c): No Sir.
- (d): In view of the (c) above, question dose not arise.



*Source: Rajya Sabha (Council of States), Unstarred Question No. 29 asked by Mrs. Gundu Sudharani, <http://164.100.47.5/qsearch/OREsult.aspx>*

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## **c. ISRAEL**

### **7. India-Israel Joint Working Group on Counter Terrorism, New Delhi, 20 February 2013.**

The 8th meeting of India-Israel Joint Working Group (JWG) on Counter Terrorism was held on 20 February 2013. The Indian delegation was headed by Asoke Kumar Mukerji, Special Secretary, Ministry of External Affairs. The Israeli delegation was co-led by Ambassador Jeremy Issascharof, Deputy Director General, Head of Strategic Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Eitan Ben David, Head of Counter Terrorism Bureau at the Prime Minister's Office. The delegations comprised of representatives from relevant ministries and agencies of the two countries.

Both sides exchanged perceptions of threats emanating from terrorism and emphasized their determination to fight the menace. They discussed terrorist threats in regional and global arenas as well as national counter-terrorism measures, state sponsored terrorism, prevention of transfer of weapons to terrorists, cooperation in multilateral fora and lessons from 26/11 and 13/2. The two sides agreed to enhance dialogue and cooperation in the area of counter terrorism.

The 9th meeting of the JWG will be held in Israel in 2014.

*Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, <http://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/21204/IndiaIsrael+Joint+Working+Group+on+Counter+Terrorism>*

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## **d. KUWAIT**

### **8. Indian Classical Music Concert held at Embassy of India, Kuwait, 8 February 2013.**

An Indian classical music concert featuring Maestros Kala Ramnath on the violin, Rupak Kulkarni on the flute and Yogesh Samsi on Indian drums (Tabla) was held at the auditorium in the Embassy of India on 7 February 2013. Maestro Kala Ramnath began playing the violin at the tender age of three and is amongst the most outstanding instrumental musicians in the North Indian Classical style. Maestro Rupak Kulkarni is a disciple of renowned Flute Maestro Pandit Hariprasad Chaurasia under whose tutelage he has matured as an outstanding exponent of the instrument. Maestro Yogesh Samsi born in a family of musicians was initiated into Tabla when he was four years old. He is a disciple of the legendary Maestro Ustad Allah Rakha under whom he trained for twenty three years. The event was hosted by the Ambassador of India Satish C. Mehta.

A large number of Kuwaiti dignitaries, Ambassadors and members of the Indian community in Kuwait attended the concert. The scintillating performance by the Maestros received spontaneous applause from the appreciative audience time and again. The spell-bound audience gave the Maestros a standing ovation upon conclusion of the performance. The event was

organized by the Embassy of India in cooperation with Indian Business Council Kuwait, National Council for Culture, Arts & Letters and Dar Al-Aathaar Al-Islamiya.

*Source: Embassy of India, Kuwait,*

<http://www.indembkwt.org/ShowNews.aspx?ID=196&SECTION=1>

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### **9. Embassy of India participates in Hala February festival, Kuwait, 17 February 2013.**

The opening ceremony of the 14th HALA FEBRUARY FESTIVAL (HFF) 2013 was organized with much pageantry and enthusiasm on 15 February 2013 at 1400 hours at Salmiya's Salem Al-Mubarak street. HFF is being organized by the State of Kuwait since February 1999 mainly to promote tourism. HFF organizing committee organizes art, sports, live shows and entertainment events during the month. This year the festivities will continue till 9 March.

Embassy of India, Kuwait also joined in the celebrations by participating in the opening ceremony on 15 February 2013. The Indian pavilion was exquisitely decorated with Indian artefacts, handicraft items, imitated jewellery, handcrafted Indian saris, Incredible India posters and tourism material and other items. A large number of visitors came to the India pavilion and showed keen interest in the exhibits. Many of them, especially children, took the opportunity to take photographs posing with the exhibits.

*Source: Embassy of India, Kuwait,*

<http://www.indembkwt.org/ShowNews.aspx?ID=201&SECTION=1>

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## **e. LIBYA**

### **10. Hon'ble President of India congratulates Hon'ble President of the General National Congress of State of Libya on the 2nd Anniversary of the February 17 Revolution, Tripoli, 5 February 2013.**

H.E. Pranab Mukherjee, Hon'ble President of India conveyed his felicitations to H.E. Dr. Mohammad Yousef Al-Magarief, Hon'ble President of the General National Congress of State of Libya on the 2nd Anniversary of the 17 February Revolution which reads as follows:

Quote:

Excellency,

It gives me great pleasure to felicitate you and the people of Libya on the occasion of the 2nd anniversary of the February 17 Revolution.

India stands ready to provide assistance to the Libyan people in their journey towards progress and prosperity.

I also extend my best wishes for your personal health and well-being and for the continued progress and prosperity of the people of Libya.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Sd/-



(Pranab Mukherjee)

His Excellency Dr. Mohammad Yousef Al-Magarief

President of the General National Congress

State of Libya

Tripoli

Unquote

*Source: Embassy of India, Tripoli,*

<http://indianembassy.ly/index.php?mact=News,cntnt01,detail,0&cntnt01articleid=39&cntnt01pagelimit=5&cntnt01returnid=15>

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## **f. OMAN**

### **11. Indian Embassy Celebrates ITEC Day with Omani Alumni, Muscat, 18 February 2013.**

The Embassy of India, Muscat celebrated 'ITEC Day' on Monday, 18 February 2013. With an impressive turnout of about two hundred fifty alumni from Oman who had benefitted from the training and other educational programmes in India under the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation Programme, the Dinner Reception at the lawns of India House was attended by several high-ranking officials in the Omani Government, among whom H.E. Eng. Ali Bin Mohammed Al Abri, Undersecretary for Water Resources, Ministry of Regional Municipalities & Water Resources was the Chief Guest at the function.

Delivering his welcome address at the 300-strong gathering, H.E. J.S. Mukul, Ambassador of India briefed the participants and other guests on the highlights of the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) programme and its progress and expansion since inception on 15 September 1964 under the vision of India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru that India would share its unique socio-economic development experience and technological achievements with other developing countries. The ITEC programme represents the Government of India's earnest attempts to share the fruits of its economic and technical progress with other developing countries in the South-South Cooperation framework, he added.

Ambassador informed further that the ITEC, originating on a modest scale, has since graduated in magnitude, geographical spread, and innovative forms of technical cooperation. Today, ITEC extends to 161 countries in Asia, Africa, East Europe, Latin America, the Caribbean as well as Pacific and Small Island countries. ITEC, essentially envisaged as a bilateral programme of cooperation, has evolved and expanded over the years. One of the major activities under ITEC is vocational training or capacity building imparted by 47 state-of-the-art institutions conducting around 300 courses, having over 8,000 scholarships per year. ITEC covers a very wide range of subjects from traditional areas to leading-edge technologies. IT and English language courses are amongst the most popular.

India's ITEC programme dovetails very well with the Sultanate's priorities of human resource development, capacity building, skills up-gradation through education, training and vocational courses for increased jobs. Under ITEC, India had been extending 50 fully-funded training scholarships to Oman annually. Given its popularity, ITEC slots were increased for Oman to 80 last year, i.e. 2011-12. The ITEC scholarships have been further raised to 125 this year, i.e. 2012-13. This marks an increase of 150 per cent over one year or so. Clearly, ITEC has acquired a brand name or distinct image of its own in Oman.

Recent innovations in the Programme include building ITEC alumni networks at three levels – globally, institution-wise and country-based – for keeping in touch with peers, trainers and institutes. Social media tools, including the Ministry of External Affairs' exclusive FaceBook page for ITEC alumni, have been made available. Indian Missions abroad celebrate ITEC day to bring together alumni and to renew contacts.

During the function, ITEC alumni shared their experiences of their training time in India and said that they enjoyed their India stay as it is a country rich in cultural heritage with modern development. They spoke highly about the benefits derived from their participation in ITEC training courses and the quality time spent off campus as cosmopolitan environment and easy acceptance of all cultures and customs makes India a friendly nation.

*Source: Embassy of India, Muscat, <http://www.indemb-oman.org/What's-new-itechday2013.asp>*

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### **12. Indian participation in Muscat Festival, Muscat, 26 February 2013.**

A troupe of young Bharat Natyam dancers from the Sridevi Nrithyalaya of Chennai visited Oman and participated in the Muscat International Folklore Festival giving an outstanding performance on 21 February 2013. The dance group also gave a performance in the Auditorium of the Embassy of India on 23 February 2013.

*Source: Embassy of India, Muscat, <http://www.indemb-oman.org/What's-new-Bharatnatyam2013.asp>*

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## **g. QATAR**

### **13. Visit of Capexil Delegation to Doha for Buyer-Seller Meet (20-22 Feb 2013), Doha, 19 February 2013.**

CAPEXIL (formerly known as Chemicals and Allied Products Export Promotion Council), a premier business support organization for promotion of export from India, is sending a 12-member delegation to Doha on 20-22 February 2013.

The delegation is led by I. Rajamannar, Deputy Director, CAPEXIL and includes senior representatives of companies representing a wide range of products, including sawn timber, garnet sand, limonite, rutile, polished granite slabs and tiles, different varieties of plywood, sandstone and limestone, computer stationery and books.

The programme of the delegation, coordinated by Embassy of India, Doha with the active support of Qatar Chamber of Commerce and Industry (QCCI) and Indian Business and Professionals Network includes interactions with local companies aimed at expanding business in various sectors of mutual interest.

Members of the business delegation will be available for a Buyer Seller Meet at Hotel Radisson Blu from 1030 hours onwards on Thursday, 21 February 2013.

QCCI is organizing a business event at its premises on Wednesday, 20 February between 1100 and 1300 hours.

Bilateral trade between the two countries has been steadily increasing, exceeding US \$13.7 billion in 2011-12. Both sides are actively engaged in further strengthening bilateral business cooperation.

CAPEXIL is one of India's oldest trade bodies with 4000 members consisting of both SMEs and large corporate organizations. This is the second consecutive year that CAPEXIL is sending a delegation to Qatar with a view to realize the vast potential of expanding business with mutual benefit to both sides.

*Source: Embassy of India, Doha, [http://www.indianembassyqatar.org/press\\_release.php](http://www.indianembassyqatar.org/press_release.php)*

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#### **14. Visit of Indian Coast Guard Ship 'Samudra Prahari' to Doha – 23-26 February 2013, Doha, 21 February 2013.**

In the framework of the excellent relations and multi-faceted cooperation between India and the State of Qatar, Indian Coast Guard Ship (ICGS) "Samudra Prahari" will be making a friendly visit to Doha Port from 23-26 February 2013.

ICGS 'Samudra Prahari' is the first pollution control vessel not only of the Indian Coast Guard but also in the entire South East Asia. This indigenously built ship has, among its charter of duties, tasks like preservation, protection and prevention of the seas from marine pollution. It also protects the waters around the country from marine pollution from ships. Samudra Prahari has been responding to oil spills up to Tier II levels.

The Ship, commissioned on 9 October 2010, is equipped with state of the art pollution response and control equipment. The Ship also has several other special features.

'Samudra Prahari' is designed to carry one twin engine ALH/Chetak helicopter, five high speed boats and four water scooters for SAR, Maritime law enforcement, EEZ surveillance and high speed interdictions.

During the last two years, 'Samudra Prahari' has remained at sea for 5626 hours traversing 56664 nautical miles. In addition to discharging the requirements related to ICG charter of

duties, the ship has been involved in four pollution response operations, one fire fighting operation and one SAR operation in Indian waters.

*Source: Embassy of India, Doha, [http://www.indianembassyqatar.org/press\\_release.php](http://www.indianembassyqatar.org/press_release.php)*

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## **h. SAUDI ARABIA**

### **15. Open House for the Indian community members, Riyadh, 10 February 2013.**

The Embassy of India, Riyadh will hold the next session of 'Open House' for Indian citizens to address their problems/grievances on Thursday, 14 February 2013, in the Embassy premises from 1000 hrs to 1200 hrs.

During the Open House, members of the community can meet His Excellency Hamid Ali Rao Ambassador of India 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/Content.aspx?ID=790&PID=691>*

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### **16. Indian Business Delegation Visits Saudi Arabia, Riyadh, 24 February 2013.**

An 11-member business delegation from India will be visiting Riyadh on 27-28 February 2013. The delegation is from CAPEXIL (Chemicals and Allied Products Export Promotion Council of India) and comprise the following companies:

M/s Vimala Note Book ([kalagu@vimala.in](mailto:kalagu@vimala.in)); M/s DC Press Pvt. Ltd. ([ceo@dcbooks.com](mailto:ceo@dcbooks.com)); M/s J.P. Paper Products ([jppaper@outlook.com](mailto:jppaper@outlook.com)); M/s Cauvery Saw Mill ([cauverygroup@hotmail.com](mailto:cauverygroup@hotmail.com)); M/s Sri Vijaylakshmi Saw Mill ([limbaniwoods@gmail.com](mailto:limbaniwoods@gmail.com)); M/s Bhavani Timber Depot ([bhavanigroup@gmail.com](mailto:bhavanigroup@gmail.com)); M/s Neeraj Granites ([neerajgranites@gmail.com](mailto:neerajgranites@gmail.com)); M/s Victory Plywood Distributors ([mail@victorygroup.in](mailto:mail@victorygroup.in)); M/s Shri. Prempuriji Granimarbo Pvt Ltd ([mitulindia@satyam.net.in](mailto:mitulindia@satyam.net.in)); M/s Transworld Wood Pvt. Ltd ([mahesh@prabhatgroupp.com](mailto:mahesh@prabhatgroupp.com))

A Buyer Seller Meet (BSM) is being organized at the Riyadh Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Dabbab Street, Riyadh 11421 on 27 February 2013 from 1000 to 1300 hrs. The BSM will provide an opportunity to interact with these Indian companies particularly on items such as books, timber, granite, marbles, tissue papers and plywood etc. Interested parties are invited to attend the BSM.

The delegation is led by L. Rajamannar, Deputy Director, CAPEXIL (Southern Regional Office). CAPAXCIL covers a wide range of products ranging from natural stones like granite and marbles to processed minerals; auto tires; ceramics; cement; books; glass and glassware; fireworks; safety matches and fertilizers etc.

Any queries relating to the delegation or confirmation regarding attendance at the event may kindly be sought from/ conveyed to the Commercial Section, Embassy of India, Riyadh (Tel: 4884144 Ext: 228; Fax: 4884189, E-mail: com.riyadh.mea.gov.in).

*Source: Embassy of India, Riyadh,*

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

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## **i. TUNISIA**

### **17. Ambassador visited Jam'a Zitouna University, Tunis, 22 February 2013.**

Ambassador Nagma Mallick visited the Jam'a Zitouna on Friday, 22 February 2013. Jam'a Zitouna is the oldest University in the Arab world and was established as a school for Islamic Studies in 737 AD. It is today a University specializing in the teaching of Islamic theology, jurisprudence, and Sharia sciences.

Ambassador Mallick met with Dr. Abdel Jelil Salem, the Rector of the University who briefed her on the various programmes of study offered by the University as well as its long history. He also informed her that more than 50 per cent of its students were women. The Rector conducted Ambassador on a tour of the University and introduced her to many members of the faculty.

*Source: Embassy of India, Tunis,*

[http://www.indianembassytunis.com/PRAVASI\\_BHARATIYA\\_DIVAS.html#celebrate](http://www.indianembassytunis.com/PRAVASI_BHARATIYA_DIVAS.html#celebrate)

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### **18. Celebrating Studying in India Day, Tunis, 26 February 2013.**

The Embassy of India in Tunis is hosting an event in Tunis to celebrate the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) programme, which is a worldwide programme of scholarships offered by the Government of India to study diverse courses at reputed Indian institutions. This event will be held on Thursday, 28 February 2013, at 1800 hours at hotel Golden Tulip, Gammarth, and will unite Tunisians who have availed of these scholarships in India, who are now scattered all over Tunisia and the world, engaged in employment in the sectors of their choice. The evening will feature popular Indian dances by talented young Tunisian dancers and will include an address to the gathering by Ambassador of India in Tunisia, Mrs. Nagma M. Mallick. The Tunisian alumni will also reminisce about their experiences in India.

Every year, between 50 and 60 Tunisians attend training courses in India with full scholarships including annual return air fare. These courses are taught in top institutes in India which are in different subjects including telecommunications, rural industries, traditional medicine, English language studies, audit & accounting, and classical Indian music and dance.

The ITEC programme was begun in 1964 as a bilateral programme of assistance of the Government of India to friendly developing countries. ITEC is the flagship programme of the Government of India's technical cooperation effort, characterized by its magnitude and wide geographical and sectoral coverage. It is about cooperation and partnership for mutual benefit and addresses the needs of developing countries. Thus, the ITEC programme constitutes an integral part of India's South-South Cooperation effort.

PD DIVISION OF THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS OF INDIA ALONG WITH ITS SOCIAL MEDIA PARTNERS M/S SKARMA OF MUMBAI IS BRANDING BCIM CAR RALLY WHICH IS GOING TO BE FLAGGED OFF FROM KOLKATA ON FEBRUARY 22. THE CAR RALLY WILL GO THROUGH INDIA, BANGLADESH, MYANMAR AND CHINA AND PICTURES AND BLOGS ABOUT CAR RALLY WILL BE PUT OUT THROUGH THE INDIANDIPLOMACY FACEBOOK AND TWITTER CHANNELS AS WELL AS THROUGH INSTAGRAM.

*Source: Embassy of India, Tunis,*

[http://www.indianembassytunis.com/PRAVASI\\_BHARATIYA\\_DIVAS.html](http://www.indianembassytunis.com/PRAVASI_BHARATIYA_DIVAS.html)

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### **19. ITEC Day celebrated with Indian fervour, Tunis, 28 February 2013.**

The Embassy of India in Tunis celebrated Studying in India day on 28 February 2013 by hosting a reception for Tunisians who have availed of Government of India scholarships over the last several years. Under the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) programme, Government of India offers a worldwide programme of scholarships to students in many countries to study diverse courses at reputed Indian institutions. This programme has enjoyed a growing popularity in Tunisia and the scholarships are in different subjects including telecommunications, rural industries, accountancy, medicine and engineering, English language studies, environmental studies and classical Indian music & dance. Over 50 Tunisians have been availing of these scholarships every year.

The evening began with a welcome by the Ambassador of India in Tunisia, Nagma M. Mallick, who outlined some interesting aspects of the ITEC programme in Tunisia. She was followed by 3 young Tunisians who spoke about the courses they had followed in India, viz., diplomatic training, advanced physics and accountancy, how much they had enjoyed their stay in India and how professionally useful the courses had been to them in their professions. Thereafter, 4 young Tunisian students presented two dances set to popular Indian film songs, to great acclaim from the audience. A buffet of Indian cuisine was offered thereafter. The reception was held at the hotel Golden Tulip, Gammarth, a suburb of Tunis.

The ITEC programme was begun in 1964 as a bilateral programme of assistance of the Government of India to friendly developing countries. ITEC is the flagship programme of the Government of India's technical cooperation effort, characterized by a great magnitude and wide geographical and sectoral coverage. Currently, ITEC scholarships are offered in 158 countries around the world.

*Source: Embassy of India, Tunis,*

[http://www.indianembassytunis.com/PRAVASI\\_BHARATIYA\\_DIVAS.html](http://www.indianembassytunis.com/PRAVASI_BHARATIYA_DIVAS.html)

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## **j. UNITED ARAB EMIRATES**

### **20. Consular Attestation Services Provided by Indian Embassy, Abu Dhabi, 10 February 2013.**



Every The consular attestation services provided by the Indian Embassy in Abu Dhabi will be moved out of the Embassy premises to the IVS Global Services Centre, located at Office No. 201, 2nd floor, Sector E-25, Plot C-37, Al Nahyan Camp, off Muroor Road, from 10 February 2013. The new centre is located in the building next to UAE Red Crescent Office in Abu Dhabi.

For the convenience of applicants, service hours in the IVS Global Services Centre have been extended by three hours and it will remain open from 830-1530 hours from Sunday to Thursday except on Embassy holidays. The Indian Embassy has outsourced the attestation services to IVS Global Services from 2 January 2013 after expiry of its earlier contract with M/s VFS Global. The new contract envisages providing of attestation services at the reduced service charge of Dh 4.50 per attestation. There is no change in any of the procedures or documentation for attestations. Please visit <http://www.ivsglobalattestation.com> for further details in this regard.

*Source: Embassy of India, Abu Dhabi, <http://www.indembassyuae.org/drupal/node/858>*

## **21. Anand Sharma to Chair First Meeting of the High Level Task Force on Investment with UAE, New Delhi, 16 February 2013.**

The Union Minister of Commerce Industry and Textiles, Mr. Anand Sharma, has left for a two day visit to United Arab Emirates (UAE) today. Apart from substantive bilateral meetings, Mr. Sharma will co-chair the much anticipated first meeting of the High Level Task Force on Investment with UAE on Monday. Before leaving for the visit Mr. Sharma said “we deeply value our relationship with UAE and view this country as our economic gateway to the entire gulf region. Our economic engagement has shown a lot of promise and on the trade front. However, if we look at the spectrum of investments, the UAE investments into India stand at a level, which is far less than the potential of cooperation between our two countries. It is therefore important to take stock of the opportunities which present themselves for private and public enterprises on both sides to invest in each other’s economies and develop long term investment partnerships.”

The proposal to establish a Joint Task Force on Investments was agreed upon during the call by UAE Foreign Minister H.H. Sheikh Abdullah Bin Zayed Al Nahyan on the Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh on 27 June 2011. The First meeting that will take place on Monday will include key investment decision makers from UAE and India. Indian side will include, apart from senior members of the government, major Infrastructure financing institutions and banks in India such as IIFCL, ONGC-Videsh Ltd. (OVL), IL&FS, SBI, HSBC, Bank of Baroda, Deutsch Bank. A high level FICCI delegation of business leaders will also participate in the meeting. India will require investments to the tune of US \$ 1 trillion in infrastructure sector during the next five years with the private sector contribution estimated at 48 per cent. A significant portion of these investments are expected to be in the form of equity, where FDI from countries such as the UAE would be welcome. Some of the world’s largest sovereign wealth funds belong to the UAE. Abu Dhabi Investment Authority (ADIA) is one of the largest sovereign wealth funds in the world with assets reported to be US \$ 627 billion.

Apart from the Task Force meeting Mr. Sharma will meet his counterpart Sheikh Lubna Bint Khalid Al Qasimi, Minister of Foreign Trade, UAE and will address Businessmen/investor at Dubai tomorrow.

Bilateral trade between India and UAE during 2011-12 was US \$ 71.58 billion. In the calendar year 2012 the trade stood at US \$ 73.81 billion.

Sharma is likely to emphasize the opportunities for increased investments from the UAE in India especially in infrastructure sector such as power and utilities, roads and highways, ports, aviation, telecommunications and urban infrastructure. He is also likely to convey that India is committed to strengthening and expanding cooperation with UAE in other sectors such as construction, downstream products in the petroleum and natural gas sector, agriculture and food processing, science & technology, renewable energy, IT, education, training, health and financial services.

*Source: Press Information Bureau, New Delhi,*

<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx?relid=92267>

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## **22. Anand Sharma Meets Investors in Dubai, Dubai, 17 February 2013.**

The Union Minister for Commerce, Industry & Textiles Anand Sharma, while delivering his keynote address at the India Business Meet in Dubai today told the investors and businessmen about India's determination to rationalize and simplify the FDI procedure. He outlined the recent policy initiatives in that direction like Invest India, e-biz, FDI reforms and asked investors to take full advantage of these initiatives. "I share your concern in delay in clearances. We are working seriously in that direction. The first meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Investment examined projects in the oil and gas and decisions will be taken in 30 days flat," said Mr. Sharma.

Sharma also emphasized that "we need to go back to nine per cent growth. Once things improve, we need to have double digit growth and sustain it for at least two and half decade. This is important from the point of view of sustained growth and social needs of providing jobs to a young population." He was optimistic about India's growth story and said that the fundamentals of the economy are strong.

Mr. Sharma also agreed with the need of the investors to be assured of stability and predictability of tax regime. "The Government is working on it and Goods and Services Tax is being pushed with all sincerity", he added.

Keeping in mind the immense possibility of the economic engagement between the two countries, Mr. Sharma also announced the establishment of a High-Level Task Force, co-chaired by Sheikh Hamed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan and himself "to develop avenues of catalyzing greater investments on both sides." "I am leading a strong delegation for the first meeting of the task

force from India to take the cooperation to a new level”, said Sharma. He also welcomed the Abu Dhabi sovereign wealth funds to invest in the Indian economy.

Sharma also said that the growing synergies between the businesses of both India and United Arab Emirates and the welcoming investment climate have encouraged the private sector to enhance their engagement to a higher level. Sharma added that the two economies have the advantage of geography enabling them to become natural partners. “Our economies are also defined by complementary strengths. It is these complementary strengths, which we must build upon as two people bound by ties of history to write a new essay of economic partnership in the 21st century,” stressed Mr. Sharma.

Sharma conveyed to the business leaders from both the countries that India “views UAE as our gateway to the Gulf region to serve the region in its immediate and extended neighbourhood in Iran, Iraq, in the Northern Africa and the CIS countries.” Sharma was of the view that India considers the Gulf Cooperation Council region of strategic importance to India. Sharma said that the bilateral trade between India and the GCC region was above US \$ 145 billion in 2011-12, which five years ago was barely US \$ 67 billion, registering an increase of over 116 per cent. “I expect that with the kind of dynamism which has been shown in our trade established with UAE, this year we will early cross US \$ 175 billion.”

*Source: Press Information Bureau, New Delhi,*

<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx?relid=92272>

### **23. First Meeting of India-UAE High Level Task Force on investments, Abu Dhabi, 18 February 2013.**

The inaugural meeting of the India-UAE High Level Task Force on Investments was held today at the Emirates Palace Hotel in Abu Dhabi. More than 50 government and private sector representatives from India and the UAE were present.

The high-level taskforce, co-chaired by the Union Minister for Commerce, Industry & Textiles Mr. Anand Sharma and HH Sheikh Hamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Chairman of the Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Court, was established in April 2012 as a platform to address mutual issues associated with existing investments between the two countries and to promote and facilitate investments between the two countries.

India and UAE are significant trading partners and bilateral trade between the two countries is expected to reach new record levels in years to come.

The meeting of the India-UAE High Level Task Force on Investments included a wide-ranging discussion on priority sectors of engagement for channelling investments in the two countries, areas of shared interest including the agreement in principle to put in place an Bilateral Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement (BIPA) and expedite its conclusion, as well as assistance and support of Governments of both countries for expediting the resolution of issues

associated with existing investments and opportunities for new cross-border investments across a range of sectors.

In order to progress these efforts, it was decided that working groups will be created to strengthen and develop bilateral relations in the investment fields and an agreement was reached between the two countries on the format and structure of future discussions, including the allocation of US \$ 2 billion for investments in infrastructure projects in India and support the establishment of a strategic oil reserve in India.

“Today we have laid the groundwork for what I am confident will be a fruitful series of discussions around issues of significant interest and importance to both the UAE and India,” said HH Sheikh Hamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan.

Sharma underlined India’s status as a major destination for foreign investments and the opportunities that exist for UAE, especially in infrastructure areas such as roads and highways, power and utilities, civil aviation, ports, urban infrastructure etc. and participation through the Infrastructure Debt Funds. He also highlighted India’s desire to participate in the cooperation in the oil and gas sector of UAE.

The next meeting of the India-UAE High Level Task Force on Investments will be held on a mutually agreed date and location.

*Source: Press Information Bureau, New Delhi,*

<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx?relid=92282>

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## SPECIFIC ISSUES

### K. CONFERENCE ON THE ARAB WORLD

**24. Foreign Secretary’s inaugural address at the Conference ‘The Arab World: March Towards Democracy and its Implications’ at Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam, Kottayam, 4 February 2013.**

Respected K.P.S. Menon, Foreign Secretaries, Ambassador K.P. Fabian, Ambassador T.P. Srinivasan, Seethi, ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honour and a privilege for me to deliver the inaugural address of the Conference ‘Arab World: March towards Democracy and its Implications’.

The MEA greatly values the views and opinion of people all over the country and we regard it as a privilege to partner MG University in this activity. I believe that MEA is a pioneer in public outreach – we have an active press relations division, and our Public Diplomacy Division is a manifestation of our widening horizons. We organized the first ever national seminar of International Relations Departments of Universities from all over the country in 2011. With this little self-congratulation let me turn to the subject at hand.

The developments we have witnessed over the last two years in the Arab World are unprecedented, have brought in phenomenal changes and have altered the character of regional politics. Whether these constitute a March towards Democracy is for history to judge. Let me just preface my remarks by saying that the significance of the developments is not only for individual countries in the region, but equally important for India too, and the subject of the seminar is indeed one of global significance. Hence this conference in Kottayam is particularly valuable. When we talk of the Arab world it is necessary to recall that a significant part of this world is in Asia, and has therefore the so called Arab Spring has some meaning for the future of Asia and of India. Even before independence Pandit Nehru spoke of India's place as the natural centre and focal point of many forces at work in Asia. "The history of India is a long history of her relations with other countries of Asia. If you should know India you have to go to Afghanistan and West Asia, to China, Japan and then countries of South East Asia".

I started by saying it is for history to come to judgment on the so called Arab Spring. Two years is clearly too short a time to deterministically and accurately judge the implication of these events, especially when they continue to unfold even as we speak. (Recall the answer which Premier Chou en Lai never actually gave about it being "too early to tell" how he assessed the French Revolution!) At the same time, while a rush to judgment should be avoided, policy makers need assessments of what has happened so far to help them in the task of policy formulation. And policy is about people not about abstract concepts. I am glad therefore that we are holding this conference in Kottayam which is the heartland of the area from which millions of our citizens have gone to the Gulf; and for whom, the issue unfolding in West Asia are of critical importance in their daily lives.

It is obvious that for India, the Gulf which we consider our extended neighbourhood and the West Asia-North Africa (WANA) region is of vital strategic importance. We have said this to all our partners – who seek our views on matters ranging from Iran to Syria. The region is home to more than 5 million Indians (a significant percentage of them from Kerala) who contribute over US \$ 35 billion in remittances every year. Some estimates are that more than 20 per cent of Kerala's GDP is dependent on the Gulf. India's overall economic and commercial engagement with these countries is around US \$ 160 billion per annum. The region is a source of around 60 per cent of our oil and gas requirement and hence critical for our energy security. It is also a major source of phosphate and other fertilizers and hence a factor in our food security. Stability in the region is, therefore, vital to India's national interest. This has become a mantra in Delhi today – but decades ago – in Kerala this was instinctively understood. That is why so many have sought to build ties with the region and influence foreign policy decisions, and do want calculations based on the importance of stability.

I must assure you that the interests of our working people have been uppermost in our minds when we analyze West Asia. Yet India's policy towards the region and developments there, and our posture in the Security Council have also been guided by our principled desire not to

interfere in the internal affairs of States and being non-prescriptive. We are aware of the ramifications of the movements for democracy. We are aware that in many countries rulers have not accepted the new tide of democracy. We have called for restraint in the use of coercive measures against people who we believe should be permitted to articulate their aspirations. But we are absolutely clear – (to put it in PM's words) those societies cannot be re-ordered from outside through military force and that people in all countries have the right to choose their own destiny and decide their own future. In some cases that may take time particularly in countries with traditional power structures – but in the end the democracy that emerges is sustainable.

Developments which we are witnessing in the Arab World affect, first and foremost, the countries and peoples of that part of the world. While transition in some countries has been relatively smooth, such as in Tunisia, in others like Libya it was affected by a drawn out campaign and blatant external intervention – however explained. That said we do respect the new leadership that has emerged in Libya and its commitment to representative government. Our Ambassador to Libya has developed contacts with the new leadership. Many of them have experience of India and respect for our governance model. We hope circumstances will enable the thousands of Indians who left to revive their professional and business ties with Libya. The conflict in Syria is still being waged and there has been considerable loss of life and blood-shed. The outcome is still in the balance and it is too early to say what will emerge. Egypt, which saw a change in leadership soon after the popular uprising is today witnessing violence and clashes as it moves to put in place a new system and structure of governance. Clearly, the road to transition and change has not been easy. We helped a little with election management. Elections are a critical condition but not the only one for democratic government. I am reminded of the description of Kerala as the Yenan of India and my response to the praise of Kerala as the first place where Communists took power through the ballot; viz. that they have won many elections, but Kerala is also the first place where they exited from power through the ballot. And there is a profound message in this – because it is only through repeated elections that the democratic roots are laid down; when people look to interests and broader aspirations beyond slogans and religious appeals – which may be dominant in the first elections. And it is this long term view which provides a degree of optimism. Any government in the region which has to provide welfare to its people – will ultimately need safety and stability of its administration, of its workers and investors, steady production of natural resources and trade partners. What we need is a way of navigating the short term.

The popular movements which emerged in countries across the region were not ideology led or driven by a cohesive group. In fact, there is some debate about how it all started – in Tunisia. But at the same time recall the history of popular movements in Egypt, the rise of the Wafd and other parties from the 1920s and you realize there is a historical basis for democratic upsurge. Just as in India in Egypt it was tied to national resurgence. There was of course a long period of political stagnation when democratic expression was suppressed, so there is a learning curve to be



climbed. Now the movements, in some countries where they were successful in affecting regime change are said to have ceded political space to "Islamists" as outcomes of democratic process. What are the implications of this? I have an issue with the simplistic term "Islamist". But even if one accepts it, the issue is:- would "Islamists" dominate the political space or would it be shared in democratic manner with other more secular political actors? With this question comes the issue of the place for religious minorities and women in new power structures – these groups were in the fore-front of many of the popular movements. And, most importantly, we should ask ourselves the question as to what we can do to contribute to the process of capacity and institution building in these countries. It is in our interest that democracy stabilizes and brings the religious and secular forces into an evolutionary framework. As I said earlier – above all democracy means submitting government to popular will at the end of the term; and meanwhile governance in accord with the freedoms that make participatory democracy meaningful. Thus our analysis would require looking beyond the economic calculations of long and short term that I earlier made.

Equally significant are the implications of the unfolding developments for regional and global geopolitics. Some of the regimes which had provided the bulwark of a particular vision of security in the region for superpowers are no more. What kind of role would the successor regimes play? The turmoil in Syria has far reaching reverberations which go well beyond the country's or the region's borders. The Shia-Sunni fault-line which runs through the region adds its own volatility to the potent mix. The impact of the developments on the Arab-Israeli conflict, major power rivalry and the regional power equations requires close monitoring and in-depth analysis. For us in India – and China – and perhaps Europe – the impact on oil production trends also has to be factored in. It is we in Asia (not US) who are now critically dependent on oil from West Asia. If the democratic upsurge affects oil production it is Indian and Chinese consumers who will feel the effects first. It is heartening that there are so many professionals and technocrats in the democratic movements.

At another level, the developments in the region have a direct bearing on global terrorism and hence on our national security. The situation in Mali today is inter-alia a consequence of the turmoil in Libya whether acknowledged or not. Al-Qaeda and its affiliates such as Ansar-dine in Mali, Al-Shabaab in Somalia and others have sought to exploit the political instability in the region to their advantage. Arms pumped into the region are finding their way to terror groups. The unending conflict in Syria is facilitating similar trends in that country, providing terror groups arms and sanctuary. It would be worthwhile for this Conference to look closely at this phenomenon and its very serious implications for the world at large. Are these forces exogenous to the region? Are they separate from the democratic surge? And do we need international cooperation to deal with the menace of terrorism.

While a number of countries in the region witnessed popular movements, only six – Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Syria, Yemen and Bahrain have witnessed large scale upsurges which challenged

the regimes. Would such movements spread to other countries of the region? While swift change in leadership and/or regime could encourage popular unrest in other countries, drawn out, violent and bloody conflicts could well act as a deterrent. While technology facilitated the spread of information and mobilization of people, there are other traditional networks including social and religion-based which act as countervailing forces. (This is by the way something which even fully functional democracies are familiar with!) Except Bahrain which sits on the Shia-Sunni fault line and where the demonstrations were contained through regional effort, all other countries which have witnessed large scale popular movements are non-monarchies. Will this continue to be so? Do monarchies enjoy greater credibility amongst the populace? There are questions which your seminar needs to address: Let me say we have been conscious of the need to avoid a 'one size fits all' approach. We have been guided by a sense of solidarity with democratic movements, opposition to external interventions, and being very clear about the preservation of our relations in the national interest.

The issue of whether the Spring is actually a regional phenomenon could be put differently by posing the question, whether the desire for change is a Pan-Arab phenomenon. Rami G. Khoury, Editor-at-large of *The Daily Star* in a piece written at the end of last year said that there is no such thing as a cohesive, single "Arab World" as every Arab country follows a different path in pursuing its own political re-configuration. Khoury, however, added that the 350 million ordinary Arab men and women across the region are nevertheless expressing some common grievances, attitudes and aspirations. Among them there is a desire to acquire freedom that people in other parts of the world take for granted. To restore their place in the global movement of ideas and achievements. This is not just about social media led middle classes – though these media facilitate a leadership role; they are conscious they once had a great place in the world of ideas. Recall Nehru's words about the extraordinary achievements of Arab civilization in historical times: "The intellectual curiosity, the adventures in rationalist speculation, the spirit of scientific enquiry, among the Arabs of the 8th and 9th centuries are very striking". The heirs to such a great tradition cannot long accept being unable to participate in the globalization of cultural, scientific and spiritual movements. We in India certainly cannot stand aloof from this mobilization.

To conclude, 'the march towards democracy', as the Conference title refers to Arab aspirations, is a path of promise but fraught with challenges and pit falls. It is a path of far reaching consequences and would need to be traversed with caution. There will be no dearth of self serving detractors working for their own narrow interests; but in the end democratic movements are larger than the specific interests which might motivate some among them. And as beneficiaries of democracy ourselves, we believe the implications of the democratic upsurge would be positive in the long run.

I wish the Conference all success.

Thank you.

*Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, <http://www.mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/21152/Foreign+Secretarys+inaugural+address+at+the+Conference+The+Arab+World+March+Towards+Democracy+and+its+Implications+at+Mahatma+Gandhi+University+Kottayam>*

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## I. INDIA AND THE MIDDLE EAST

### **25. Antony Pleads for a Proactive Role by India in West Asia Region, New Delhi, 13 February 2013.**

In the backdrop of tumultuous changes sweeping the Middle East, the Defence Minister A K Antony today expressed concern about the safety and security of Indians working in the region.

Addressing the 15th Asian Security Conference organized by IDSA here he said, “the strong urge for change is clearly visible across the region.” Dwelling at length on the changes taking place in the Middle East Antony said, the voice of youth is a universal message that is strongly echoing across to governments in all regions of the world. Defence Minister said, the recent developments in all these countries give us lesson that no government, or regime, can afford to ignore the popular aspirations anymore. Antony emphasized that social media has emerged as a potent and vibrant force. The social media has served as a ‘force multiplier’ in the hands of the protesters, he said.

He said “such transition unfortunately has been accompanied by large-scale violence.” Expressing deep concern on the ongoing violence in Syria and supposedly the Al Qaeda taking over the government in Mali, he remarked “India can ill afford to remain aloof from the transformative changes in its immediate and extended neighbourhood.” He cautioned the audience that the “journey ahead will be long, tortuous and full of twists and turns.” Since the developments in West Asia have the potential of changing the regional and geopolitical landscape and the region being critical for energy security, we have to be extremely tactful in safeguarding our interests while dealing with the problems of the region, he added.

Highlighting the importance of a stable and peaceful West Asia on the economic growth of our economy, Mr. Antony said, “In 2012 India received US \$70 billion dollars in remittances from foreign countries and a majority of them came from the gulf region. These remittances support nearly 40-50 million families in India and at the same time contribute to local prosperity. Adding further that India’s trade with the region is expanding and during 2011-12 our trade with Gulf Cooperation Council was more than US \$145 billion dollars, he said that recent developments have complicated the security situation in the region. During 2011 India evacuated nearly 19,000 Indians working in Libya. Given India’s vital stake in peace and stability in the region, it is natural for India to have an interest in abiding peace and security in the region.”

At the outset, Director General, IDSA, Arvind Gupta gave the welcome address. A galaxy of distinguished speakers and strategic experts from West Asia, North Africa, United States, U.K, Europe, Australia, Pakistan, Japan and China are attending this three daylong conference.

*Source: Press Information Bureau, New Delhi,*  
<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx?relid=92193>

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**26. Inaugural Address by the Hon'ble Defence Minister, Mr. A. K. Antony, at the 15th Asian Security Conference on "Emerging Trends in West Asia: Regional and Global Implications", New Delhi, 13 February 2013.**

Members of the strategic communality

Distinguished participants,

Excellencies,

Members of the media,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to address this distinguished gathering that has come together for the 15th Asian Security Conference being organized by IDSA. Over the years, the Conference has attracted eminent strategic experts and scholars from across the world. This is the 15th year in a row that the IDSA is organizing a conference on themes pertaining to Asian security.

The response of the international strategic community to this year's theme, "Emerging Trends in West Asia: Regional and Global Implications", has been encouraging. In the context of West Asia, the theme is highly relevant, as developments in West Asia have a major impact on regional and international security. Many distinguished speakers from West Asia, North Africa, United States, United Kingdom, Europe, Australia, Pakistan, Japan and China will be sharing their views during the Conference. '

Since December 2010, the Middle East has been experiencing tumultuous changes. These changes have ushered in fundamental political and socio-economic transformation in the Arab world. New political dispensations have taken over in Tunisia, Libya, Egypt and Yemen. Such transition, unfortunately, has been accompanied by large-scale violence. The ongoing violence in Syria is a matter of concern for the region, as well as the world. Moreover, recently, extremists believed to be linked with the AI Qaeda elements took over the government in Mali. Meanwhile, France has sent its military forces for intervention.

The recent developments in all these countries afford a few lessons: Firstly, no government, or regime, can afford to ignore the popular aspirations anymore. The common strand running through all these protests and demonstrations has been the youth. The voice of the youth is a universal message that is strongly echoing across to governments in all regions of the world. The strong urge for change is clearly visible across the region. Secondly, the process of transformation is far from complete and on the contrary, has just begun. The journey ahead will be long, tortuous and full of unexpected twists and turns. Thirdly, the developments in West Asia

have the potential of changing the regional and geopolitical landscape. The West Asia region is critical for energy security. Instability in the region will have an impact on global oil prices, availability of oil and gas and shipping of these resources. Fourthly, though traditional political and socio-economic structures have been transformed, new structures that will replace them have not yet got consolidated. While fundamentalist forces have got a fillip, democracy is yet to be consolidated. New political equations are emerging in Iraq and Afghanistan, which has heightened regional and global uncertainties. Lastly, social media has emerged as a potent and vibrant force. The social media has served as a 'force multiplier' in the hands of the protesters.

For India, in particular, West Asia is a critical region. People-to-people contacts have existed between India and West Asia for centuries. These links have got deepened and further strengthened in the era of globalization. Our stability and prosperity are affected by the developments in the region. First, the Gulf region is vital for India's energy security. The region has about 48% of the world's total proven oil reserves and almost 16% of the world's natural gas reserves. Nearly two-thirds of our hydrocarbon imports are from this region. This will continue to be so in the near future. In addition, nearly 6.5 million Indians live and work in different countries of this region. A World Bank report says that India received US \$ 70 billion in remittances during 2012 and a majority of the remittances came from the Gulf region. These remittances support nearly 40-50 million families in India and at the same time, contribute to local prosperity. During 2011, India evacuated nearly 19, 000 Indians working in Libya. The safety and security of Indians working in the region is a sensitive concern for the Indian government.

India's trade with the region is expanding. During 2011-12, India's trade with Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) was more than \$145 billion (with exports and imports from the region standing at 20% and 14%) respectively). India also offers a destination for surplus funds in GCC countries. India has a long tradition of democracy and it is home to a diverse, pluralistic society. The democratic processes have managed its vast regional, cultural, linguistic and regional diversity. At a time when several West Asian nations are in a state of transition, India can share its experiences with the governments and civil societies.

Recent developments have complicated the security situation in the region. Given India's vital stakes in peace and stability in the region, it is natural for India to have an interest in abiding peace and security in the region. At the same time, long-standing conflicts in the region cannot be ignored.

India can ill-afford to remain aloof from the transformative changes taking place in its immediate and extended neighbourhood. We have centuries old linkages with the Arab world. Our civilizations have closely interacted and influenced each other in the past. We have excellent bilateral relations and the relation can be placed on an even stronger footing in the new phase that has set in recently in West Asia.

Ladies and gentlemen,

This Conference is holding deliberations on several themes. The discussions will explore the causes behind the ongoing transformation; look into the future and make an attempt to assess the regional and global impacts of these changes. I have been told that several sessions will also explore India's relations with this region. I am sure that the delegates will come up with crucial inputs and practical recommendations during these discussions.

With these words, I hope that our foreign guests will have a pleasant and an enjoyable stay. I wish the deliberations at the Conference all success.

Thank you. Jai Hind.

*Source: Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, New Delhi,*  
[http://www.idsa.in/keyspeeches/DefenceMinisterAKAntony\\_15ASC](http://www.idsa.in/keyspeeches/DefenceMinisterAKAntony_15ASC)

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**27. Speech by the Indian National Security Advisor, Amb. Shivshankar Menon, on “India and West Asian Security”, New Delhi, 15 February 2013.**

Mr. Arvind Gupta, Director IDSA,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

Thank you for asking me to speak at the annual Asian Security Conference organized by the IDSA. The Conference, like the IDSA, has developed a formidable reputation for excellence in terms of content and participation. You have also chosen a very topical theme.

There is today no region which impinges on India's security with as much immediacy as West Asia. This is not surprising or new. For centuries our extended neighbourhood in West Asia has been a part of our lives in India, beginning with the four thousand year old trading relationships evidenced by sailing ships on Indus Valley seals found in archaeological sites in Iraq. These are truly historical, cultural, linguistic, religious and civilizational links.

The strong Indian interest in West Asia continues to this day. You know the facts. Over 6.5 million Indians live in the region, the largest concentration of the Indian Diaspora abroad. In several countries they constitute the largest expatriate group. The Diaspora in West Asia remits home over US\$ 35 billion every year. India's trade and economic ties with the region of about US\$ 160 billion are growing, as is our dependence for energy. About 60% of our oil and gas is imported from the region. It is also a factor in our food security as a major source of phosphate and other fertilizers. Major maritime lines of communication carrying our westward trade and our energy supplies pass through the region. We share common cause with the people of the region in fighting extremism and terrorism.

In sum, India's interest lies in a peaceful and balanced strategic environment in West Asia which is such an important part of our extended periphery. (Notice that I do not say stability. This is even though it has become a mantra in Delhi that stability in the region is vital to India's national interest. I am not sure that obstructing or preventing change is practical or sensible policy,



though helping or nudging change in the right direction might be. But that is something for you to discuss.

India's contribution:

It is in the quest for regional peace and security that India has sought to contribute to West Asian security within the limits of her capacities.

We have done so politically, encouraging the solution of the region's conflicts and differences through dialogue and by peaceful means. On the Arab-Israeli conflict our support for peace in the Middle East has been principled and consistent. India was the first non-Arab country to recognize the state of Palestine.

We have opposed the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems in the region. For instance, we have recognized Iran's right to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy while urging that the international community be convinced that she is fulfilling her international commitments, and arguing that the only effective way to do so is through dialogue and by using the IAEA's expertise.

We have contributed to anti-piracy efforts off the Horn of Africa and developed maritime cooperation with the countries of the Gulf to protect the sea-lanes that are vital to our trade and energy flows.

We have worked to promote defence cooperation with the countries of the region, bilaterally and through cooperation among the Indian Ocean rim countries. Our first defence cooperation agreement with a Gulf country was signed with Qatar during Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's 2008 visit.

We have built effective partnerships within the region to combat terrorism and extremism, working with our partners against terrorist groups which are increasingly interlinked across South and West Asia.

We have sought to build energy security through long term arrangements and mutual investments, both upstream and downstream, in the energy industry of the region and India, building the mutual inter-linkages that assure both producers and consumers of stability.

While the list is long, it is our hope that it could and should grow in time, in accordance with our mutual interests, as our countries develop their capabilities.

The situation today:

The immediate question, however, is how recent dramatic developments and changes in West Asia will impact on our security and on what we have been trying to achieve with the countries of the region.

It seems to me that the turbulence in the region poses short term challenges but also opens up longer term opportunities in terms of our security.

The challenges are well known. They include the space that domestic changes in several countries have opened up for extremist groups to pursue their agendas. They include the possible regional instability and the sectarian divide that seems to be opening up. They include the disruptions and dislocations that accompany processes of fundamental change in the way these societies and nations are run.

The opportunities are less easily evident. But in the long run, what we are seeing could result in the people of West Asia taking control of their own destinies and choosing their futures and leaders. We in India have strongly supported the democratic aspirations of the people, but have not supported externally enforced change. We have called for restraint in the use of coercive measures against the people. But we are clear that societies cannot be reordered from the outside through military force. As recent experience shows, external interventions have uncertain and unstable outcomes. We only have to look at the instability radiating out of Libya into the Sahel region and the prolonged conflict in Syria, with spill over effects in Mali and the wider region.

Beyond specific situations in individual countries, we are witnessing deeper and longer term changes with profound security implications. The changes in the world energy scenario, for instance, and its geopolitical effects in terms of great power interests in the region. What political and security effects will the West's diminished dependence on Middle East oil have? Demographics, communications, the political role of religion, and cultural factors are all changing rapidly and in ways that affect the politics of West Asia very deeply. But these factors have yet to work themselves out and their implications are still far from clear.

For practitioners, the issue is how to navigate the short term with its challenges to arrive at a more positive long term future. Frankly speaking, we had all got comfortable dealing with West Asia in ways set by habit. That is no longer possible. I do hope that your deliberations will map the uncharted territory that we have entered. We are in a time when scholarship and increased engagement with the region is needed more than ever before. Your discussions could help us to see where we are and what we should do.

I wish you success in your deliberations.

*Source: Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, New Delhi,*

<http://www.idsa.in/keyspeeches/IndiaandWestAsianSecurity>

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**28. The Asia Centre Annual Lecture on 'What Might Be Happening in West Asia' by Hon'ble Vice President of India, Mr. M. Hamid Ansari at the Asia Centre, at 1800 hours, Bangalore, 15 February 2013.**

Some in this audience, members of a tribe adept at eulogizing or lamenting its golden past, are also familiar with the tradition and practices of command structures. It is this tradition that brings

me here today, dutifully responding to the injunction of a tribal chief in the person of Ambassador A.P. Venkateswaran.

I have no hesitation in confessing that in this case compliance is a matter of pleasure.

Personal preferences apart, an opportunity to exchange views and hear alternate perspectives is always of relevance. At the same time, I am conscious of the hazards of articulating thoughts before a knowledgeable audience; I, therefore, beg indulgence if not forgiveness from those who know better.

I have chosen for today's talk a subject of considerable interest to us despite the inadequacy of attention given to it most of the time by the national media.

A word about nomenclature is relevant. In a continent called Asia, its various geographical segments have to be named logically rather than in terms of historical accidents. West Asia is therefore as logical as East Asia, South Asia or Central Asia. Most in this audience would know that the terminology of the colonial period, naming regions as Near East, Middle East or Far East, made sense only from the perspective of London.

Despite this, the propensity of the West Asians to call the region Middle East is, to say the least, baffling. Is it a case of "reinforcement of the stereotype" or, to use Antonio Gramsci's phrase, "a dilution of the consciousness of what one really is"?

## II

Allow me to begin with a preposition that might sound startling. The so-called "Arab Spring" did not happen suddenly. What is happening in some West Asian lands today by way of political turbulence has had a long gestation, was waiting to happen, and is in the nature of serial volcanic eruptions whose intensity and duration is difficult to predict.

Some questions readily come to mind. What is the nature of the turmoil and the forces propelling it? What is its impact on different segments of society and on social relationships? What is its immediate or medium term impact on the economy? Has it influenced security perceptions of the individual states and their views on regional security? What are its implications for India and Indian interests in the country and the region?

Some facts can be recalled to understand the context. In the first place, all the lands in North Africa and West Asia (with the exception of Iran and Israel) are Arabic-speaking societies, many with tribal structures still intact, overwhelmingly Muslim, who experienced colonial or neo-colonial trauma in the first half of the 20th century. The experience of each, however, was distinct. Secondly, the structures of dominance put in place after World War I, and continued with some modifications in the second half of the century, were essentially neo-patriarchal, characterized by one Arab scholar as "the marriage of imperialism and patriarchy." The net result

of this was historical retardation or, as the Moroccan historian Abdullah Laroui put it, "infra-historical rhythm."

The implications of the latter were far reaching. As early as 1928 a Lebanese lady by the name of Nazira Zain al-Din wrote about the scourge of Four Veils - of cloth, ignorance, hypocrisy, and stagnation. This could not but impact on the nationalist upsurge that surfaced in different places from time to time. The clash of secular and Islamist nationalist traditions also became pervasive. Writing in 1996 Bassam Tibi of Syria, calling himself a post-1967 generation man, admitted the failure of the effort "to replace the myths of Arab nationalism by an Arab enlightenment" and by "the erosion of the legitimacy of the secular nation-state." Similar judgments emanated from other, non-Islamist, intellectuals.

Other developments, relating to the advent of authoritarian governance combining one party and military rule, aggravated the process. It suited the regimes and also the patterns of Western dominance and strategies of the Cold War. The one exception was Palestine. It wounded the psyche of every individual in every Arab land. The grievance had merit; it was depicted poignantly by Nasser to Kennedy in 1962: "One who did not possess gave a promise to another who did not deserve, and these two managed by power and deceit to deprive those who both owned and deserved."

Lamentation alone, however, has never been known to correct the wrongs of history, and has not done so in the case of Palestine.

In 2002 the Arab Human Development Report identified freedom, empowerment of women, and knowledge as the three deficits that hampered human development in Arab countries. The public mood of pessimism was summed up in the remark that "we, Arabs, do not have the power to do anything and there are certain alien forces that control our destiny."

The despondency of two lost generations, in which modernity was imported as a product rather than as a process, also propelled a quest for alternatives: of an imagined past, an ideal of authenticity, an instrument of mobilization well rooted in the consciousness of the masses. This brought forth Islamism in different manifestations. It was psychologically reassuring. As an instrument of protest, it sought democratic governance to deny the legitimacy of the authoritarian state. Rachid Gannouchi, leader of an Islamist party in Tunisia, summed it up in an essay written in exile at the end of the 20th century: "A democratic system of government", he wrote, "is less evil than a despotic system of government that claims to be Islamic."

The end of the Cold War and Iraq's invasion of Kuwait altered power equations. Saddam Hussain's misadventure in Kuwait left him crippled but without loosening his hold on Iraq. An external catalyst was injected on spurious ground in the shape of the Iraq War. It progressed from 'known unknowns' to 'unknown unknowns'. Its cost in human and material terms to both the

victor and the vanquished is still being assessed; on the side of the former, a first estimate in 2008 by Joseph Stiglitz and Linda Bilmes put it at three trillion dollars.

The war and the prolonged period of occupation and resistance to it in all its manifestations impacted on the Arab status quo but on a delayed-action fuse. The regimes that have tumbled, and those that are challenged, failed to gauge the urge for change in the majority segments of their youthful populations. The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan also demonstrated the limits of the military capacity of the United States in a non-conventional conflict.

In August 2010, through Presidential Study Directive 11, President Obama asked his government agencies to prepare for change. According to an article by David Ignatius in the Washington Post of March 11, 2011, the document cited 'evidence of growing citizen discontent with the region's regimes', said the region is entering a critical period of transition, and asked his advisors to 'manage these risks by demonstrating to the people of the Middle East and North Africa the gradual but real prospect of greater political openness and improved governance.'

The military and political conflicts in the first decade of the present century brought to the fore other fault lines that have left their mark on the balance of socio-political power in individual countries of the region. These have taken the shape of:

- Ethnic assertions as with the Kurds in Iraq and Syria;
- Sectarian empowerment of Shias in Iraq and demands for rights by the Shias majority in Bahrain and Shia minority in Saudi Arabia;
- Democratic upsurges in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya and muted rumblings in some of the GCC states; and
- The power struggle for Syria and its regional and global implications.

The impact of each set of challenges has been different. In Iraq, the Kurdish demand for greater role in governance in a highly centralized Arab state has been long standing. The US-led war against Saddam Hussein has resulted in a de facto autonomous Kurdish region in Iraq where the authority of Baghdad is minimal and frequently contested on matters of daily governance. In Syria domestic political discontent against one-party rule, encouraged and assisted materially by some regional and other powers, has assumed the form of a full-fledged civil war with no end in sight. This has given Syrian Kurds a little elbow room though without external recognition; it is likely to be complicated by neighbouring Turkey's stern policy towards its Kurdish population. The new situation in both countries has prompted apprehensions about efforts to give shape to various projects of cartographic engineering in the region, or as Hassanein Heikal put it recently, "a New Sykes-Picot."

The democratization of the political process in Iraq, in the wake of the war of 2003, projected for the first time the demographic reality of the state and resulted in the emergence of Shias as the

majority politico-sectarian faction. The loss of political power by the Arab Sunnis of the country was deeply resented and continues to be contested. It also has wider geo-political ramifications. In 2004 the King of Jordan contributed, allegedly at the prompting of his chief of intelligence, the term "Shia Crescent" to the political vocabulary of the region.

Unconsciously, perhaps, it helped highlight the geopolitical gains that accrued to Iran in the wake of the Iraq War. Iran has sustained its assistance to the Hezbollah in Lebanon; there is, however, no evidence as yet of a material Iranian impulse in the simmering of discontent in the Shia segments of the Bahraini and Saudi population since this emanates from domestic factors and pre-dates the Iraq War.

The immediate details of the political eruptions in the past two years in Tunisia and Egypt are known to most people; the backdrop is not. Since independence in 1956, the Tunisian public or people (sha'b) mostly subscribed to the ideal to a homogenous, united, modern, Francophile and secular body-politic and a paternalistic relationship in a 'pact of obedience' to the Leader (Zaim). Economic grievances did surface from time to time but did not transform themselves into movements for rights. It is this which changed when Mohamed Bouazizi set himself on fire on December 10, 2010. Thenceforth, 'the people' became the point of reference. This did not mean homogeneity; gaps of perception on matters regional, generational and cultural have emerged and are aggravated by the demographic reality and high unemployment of around 18 percent according to a World Bank study. There is an ongoing debate between Islamism and secularism but the focus even of the Islamist Al-Nahda leaders is to establish institutions that safeguard public debate and electoral choice. And yet, as the happening of February 6 was to show, derailment is always on the cards.

Egypt is the very reverse of the relative tranquillity of Tunisia though the Tunisian protests served as an inspiration. A perceptive observer has recently noted that two years after the initial turmoil 'Egyptians don't really know the balance of forces in their own homeland.' This reaffirms Leon Trotsky's observation that 'the masses go into a revolution not with a prepared plan of social reconstruction, but with a sharp feeling that they cannot endure the old regime.' The leaderless protestors in Tahrir Square and elsewhere in Egypt, fully assisted by modern communications technology and ad hoc mechanisms of defence against police tactics, focused on toppling the Mubarak regime.

The first stage of the Egyptian revolution was essentially leaderless and reflected the aspirations of all segments of society. Its limitations became evident with the progress of events. The electoral process and the constitution-making brought to the fore the Muslim Brotherhood as the most organized socio-political force on the scene. It is strong but not unchallenged; on the other hand, while both the Salafists and the liberal-secularists have mobilized against it, they do not find convergence on critical values and tactics. The most recent events thus tend to highlight



nature of the challenge: how to forge a democratic system while integrating the Brotherhood and other Islamists into the political game.

Violence, until recently, was generally avoided. Ominous signs of a reversal are now emerging. A new organization, the Black Bloc, made its appearance in the last week of January, claiming to be 'formed in reaction to the Muslim Brotherhood's military wing'. In a first reaction, the Ministry of Interior has called them terrorists and ordered their arrest. A challenge is being mounted by the liberal-secularists, but not the salafists, to the legitimacy of the President himself. The Brotherhood's uncompromising position on the making of the constitution and the electoral law has hardened the political divide which can only be addressed by the proposed National Dialogue.

Events in Libya, beginning in February 2011, took a somewhat different course. The discontent against Gaddafi was used as a pretext for external interference in the shape of UN Security Council action, the declaration of no-fly zone, followed by extensive bombing of Tripoli by the French and British air forces. The mysterious refuge in Britain of intelligence chief Mousa Koussa and the cooption of other figures of the Gaddafi regime in the new set up does suggest a measure of external involvement of a clandestine nature in the progress of events. Nor were miscalculations avoided; the murder of the US Ambassador in Benghazi was to show that the nature of some of Gaddafi's opponents was not fully understood.

### III

Two dimensions of the developments discussed above require closer scrutiny. The first relates economic grievances. High unemployment among the youth, and declining household incomes, has been a common factor of social unrest in all the affected countries. A World Bank report in September 2012 assessed that 'recent political changes will be meaningful if they lead to concrete social and economic development.' The Bank has emphasized the need for transparency, good governance, job creation and competitive private sector. There is also an insistence, on the part of prospective western donors, on 'real democratic transition' taking place. A satisfying factor, from the view point of the donors, is the acceptance by the new regimes of the neo-liberal economic reforms undertaken by the previous administrations.

Less explicit, but nevertheless constraining, are the requirements of rich regional donors. There is no evidence as yet of these matters having been addressed comprehensively by the new administrations; tactical commitments, however, have been made. Unease about the activities of the Muslim Brotherhood in GCC states, particularly UAE's concern about Al-Islah, has acquired a higher profile in recent months. The sole exception to this is Qatar which maintains a multi-pronged relationship with the Brotherhood.

A critical question discussed in different fora and on different planes, directly as well as elliptically, is the place of Islam in society and in State policies. In a book published in the year

2000 the American journalist Geneive Abdo wrote that 'the religious transformation of Egyptian society appeared obvious to me shortly after I stepped out in the Cairo breeze one Sunday evening in 1993', adding that 'the Islamic revival was broad-based, touching Egyptians in every social class and all walks of life.' The only outstanding question, she concluded, 'is to what degree the religious revival will take over Egyptian society.'

The Brotherhood, with deep roots in society and in professional groupings, subscribes to the amorphous dictum 'Islam is the solution.' Some in this audience would know that in terms of the political theory of Islam, governance is to be by consultation, allegiance is conditional, and dissent admissible. This, in modern terminology, would tantamount to democratic governance. The political history of Muslim societies, however, is characterized by the opposite. The choice often is between form and content. The paradox is summed up succinctly by the French-Algerian scholar Mohammed Arkoun: 'Islam is theologically Protestant and politically Catholic.'

The challenge for contemporary Muslim societies, in the wake of the upsurge against autocratic governance, is to seek legitimacy both in the light of their own cultural authenticity and the norms of the contemporary world. Local situations, even national characteristics, would shape the contours of the debate and outcomes in individual societies. Generalized perceptions of approval or otherwise would be unhelpful.

One last aspect pertains to external impulses. Since the advent of the 21st century, the region and its countries have been witness to initiatives based on innovative doctrines emanating from Western powers. Evidence of a design is compelling. Should conclusions be drawn from it?

Constraints of time prevent me from dwelling on the situation in Yemen and Jordan. Both require watching since many similar forces are at work there. The GCC states -authoritarian and undemocratic but India and Indian friendly - are in a different time zone of political evolution and the combination of enormous wealth and small populations would in all likelihood sustain the status quo for some more time. Bahrain would be an exception to this. If and when turbulence does reach the GCC, it would impact on our strategic and commercial interests significantly.

#### IV

How do these developments affect us in India? Needless to say, political turbulence and economic disruption on our western flank, as in other neighbouring regions, would be an unwelcome development. Formally, a change of regime would not impact on our perceptions since Indian state practice does not admit of regime recognition. Nor is India generally given to pronouncement of value judgments on the domestic set up of other countries unless such a step is motivated by more compelling considerations of statecraft. Barring a serious divergence of views on questions of our national interest, therefore, the new regimes in these countries would not

have an adverse impact on our bilateral relations. On the contrary, hard economic and geo-political interests would ensure harmonious relationships.

In the final analysis therefore the changes, voluntary and expressive of popular will, are to be welcomed. We know only too well that democratic institution-building requires commitment as well as patience and a temper of tolerance. To the extent our assistance is sought, it should be made available without being prescriptive. The transition to a democratic system would be genuine and durable as long as it is autonomous. Suggestions of imposition would be a negation of both.

There is, of course, another scenario to be reckoned with. What would happen if the democratization process falters, if disagreements take the shape of violent dissent, if the principle of majority rule within the framework of equal rights is not adhered to, if newly installed democratic governments fail to meet public expectations on better governance, social justice, employment and growth? Would renewed turbulence induce external intervention - regional or extra regional? Would it make the region resemble Pandemonium, depicted by the poet Milton as the capital of Hell where the great Satan would be the ruling deity?

*Source: Vice President of India, New Delhi,*

<http://vicepresidentofindia.nic.in/content.asp?id=421>

## m. CONFERENCE ON IRAN AND EURASIA

### **29. External Affairs Minister's speech at Global India Foundation Conference on "Iran's Eurasian Dynamic: Mapping Regional and Extra-Regional Interests", New Delhi, 13 February 2013.**

Vice Admiral P J Jacob,  
K Santhanam,  
Sreeradha Datta,  
Anil K Agarwal,  
Prof Omprakash Mishra,  
Ladies and Gentlemen

I am happy to be in your midst today to inaugurate the conference on "Iran's Eurasian Dynamic: Mapping Regional and Extra-Regional Interests" which is extremely topical and important.

Iran is a friend of India, and we have strong civilizational links which has positive impact in our contemporary relations.

To think about the theme of today's conference, it is common knowledge that Iran is a strong and influential player in the Gulf region. But its links, influences and interests in the Eurasian region will be an interesting concept to ponder and study. Iran's historical, cultural and linguistic influence over Eurasia is also well established. Old trade routes linking Eurasia and Persia stand testimony to Iran's intrinsic links to the Eurasian region throughout history.

With the advantage Iran has in terms of geographical proximity and a well developed network of road, rail and waterway connectivity with several countries in Eurasia, Iran can act as a gateway to Eurasia. It can host trade, transit and energy corridors linking Eurasia with rest of the world.

The Persian Gulf, particularly Iran, is under focus in recent years, on account of its pre-eminent position in the region. Iran's nuclear programme has been under constant, close scrutiny and the international community has been talking to Iran to negotiate a peaceful course of action. One important question crops up in our minds. Should India be cautious and remain aloof in this process or should it engage actively in the dialogue that Iran has with the world in achieving a peaceful resolution of the issue.

India stands at the forefront of countries that appear to be in a position to give Iran the kind of advice, comfort and handholding that would be called for in these very critical and crucial discussions and dialogue which Iran needs to have, and it realizes that it needs to, with the rest of the world. We have had to take positions that obviously not necessarily align themselves with the aspirations or at least perceived aspirations of Iran in recent times.

The good news is that Iran has understood this. We have remained friends with Iran, and good friends with Iran, in a substantive way despite the fact that we could not stand by them in critical moments when it came to voting in the United Nations. I know that they would be disappointed; anyone is disappointed if you cannot get someone to stand by you in moments which are critical. But the important thing is that we were able to continue talking with Iran, that Iran understood why we were doing what we were doing, and that it was clear to the world that we were not taking sides against Iran but that we were taking a principled position.

Having taken that principled position, we would want our engagement to continue growing and our support in those critical matters and dimensions in which it was important for Iran to fight the sanctions, and we would be there to be counted as a friend of Iran. I think this is a very interesting and a very important dimension of India standing today in the world.

I might underscore that we have a strategic partnership with the United States of America. We value our relationship with the United States of America, and we believe both in terms of pragmatism, as indeed in terms of principles, that our relationship with the United States of America as it has evolved over the last decade and a half is a very valuable and important relationship both in terms of energy security as indeed in terms of our engagement with the world. And to see this come out of the continued commitment in the NAM movement is obviously a very interesting thought. So we remain good friends with the United States of America; we are extremely good friends with Iran. Therefore, it places us in a very significant position to be able to bridge the gaps and to provide the linkages that are necessary for a meaningful dialogue.

I think this is also true in the greater region, in a region that is in a sense impacted by what is happening in this region and that is the region of West Asia, Palestine and Israel. Our past commitment to Palestine was a commitment that came devoid of any relationship with Israel. Our present-day commitment to Palestine comes with a very meaningful relationship with Israel. The important thing of course is that again both Israel and Palestine are willing and able to understand that we have a relationship which is a balanced relationship between the two.

In a sense, if I might be allowed to say so, the true fruition of non-alignment as far as India is concerned is getting reflected in our ability to engage on sides that would otherwise feel a great deal of trust deficit and would have some reluctance in open dialogue. So, fortunately, the world has accepted that there is no alternative to dialogue although perhaps a little bit in the countries affected by Arab Spring, the significance and importance of dialogue may have been diluted considerably much to our despair. We do still continue to feel that dialogue is the answer and that dialogue should not be given up very easily.

So we do have a very important potential position vis-à-vis dialogue in this region. We have outstanding relationship with Russia. We have excellent relationships in the Central Asian region. I think these are not purely based on economic interests but go far beyond economic interests. There are some civilizational, instinctive rapport and engagement that provide the base for the edifice of economic interests, which of course are converging.

But given that the economic interests are converging, given that we have a high priority for energy security and sourcing energy for rapid growth of the Indian economy, the pipelines, the critical, crucial pipelines in Central Asia bringing in gas to India and to our region are very important. Though a lot of work has been done on this, I think we still have hiccups that prevent us from going forward as fast and as quickly as possible.

Coming back to the point that I raised for you which is, should India continue to be as careful, cautious and as aloof as it is despite the enormous potential that it has for improving the content of dialogue and the possibility of substantive dialogue, or should India begin to get into a greater mode of encouraging and therefore engaging itself more extensively, it is a big question. But in answering this question I think it is very important for us to understand what our own people want.

Sadly, and I say this particularly to all of you distinguished people here associated with the Global India Foundation, sadly, the engagement of India's domestic population and thinking processes with our standing in the world today is nowhere near it was after independence when the outcome of our independence movement and the very perception of our independence movement were seen as engagement on behalf of the disadvantaged and the subjugated people of the world, of Africa, Asia and elsewhere. Therefore, India's leadership reached out with a kind of a seamless approach to the idea of freedom for mankind.

Today, sadly and unfortunately because of domestic preoccupations, because of the manner in which our economy and our sociology and our sociological framework has changed, the same engagement of the ordinary Indian citizen with the world has suffered. And when that suffers, obviously the leadership would worry about - are we putting in too much time looking at the world, and should we be spending more time looking at ourselves?

I actually had a newspaper saying recently that India's Foreign Minister is wasting time travelling in the world, India's Foreign Minister would be much better arguing on television programmes in the evening some inane argument about what we should do about engaging the world in a hostile manner, and declaring war on five countries at the same time, rather than travelling the world telling people that we want to be friends and we want to work together for a peaceful world for our children to come. This is not a facetious remark on something that apparently is critical of India's Foreign Minister, but this is the truth about the illiteracy of people on international relations. Therefore, what you are doing is extremely, extremely important. I hope that not only will this engage minds that are familiar and have enormous amount of knowledge in this field but hopefully you will engage, particularly for you Prof. Mishra coming from Kolkata, looking at the remarkable opportunity today that we have of dominating the world intellectually.

I think the significance of what we are able to do with Chahbahar Port actually underscores what I have just said to you. We have shared this with the United States of America, our interest in Chahbahar Port. We have shared this with our interlocutors in Afghanistan. In the normal course, the reaction would be - hands off as far as building infrastructure in Iran is concerned. But that is not the reaction that we get. We get a reaction that they understand. And they understand not simply because they want to be kind and considerate to India but they understand because in 2014 when they leave Afghanistan, somebody has to fill the void, not of troops, because Afghans must look after their own security, Afghans must secure their own people, Afghans must take their own strategic decisions, but in terms of the infrastructure and trade and financial backup that they would need for stability in their society.

We would need corridors and we would need passage. And where would that passage come from if improvement in Afghanistan takes place faster or need for improvement in Afghanistan takes faster than what we may necessarily get in Pakistan. We will need corridors and passage to Afghanistan if we have to, in a meaningful way, be there after 2014 to rebuild Afghanistan and help Afghanistan rebuild itself. Now this is a good thing. This is understood. There are no black and whites as far as India's approach to the world is concerned. I think the shades of grey that have been accepted about India's engagement and India's personality are something that we should really be encouraging.

I believe there is still a lot of work to be done on TAPI and a lot of work to be done on the International North-South Transport Corridor. I think much of that again is a question of should



we just let it happen in normal course or is it something that we should try from the front proactively looking at financial closures and getting Indian banks involved, getting Indian industry involved to the extent that Indian industry takes interest in many of these things. In the normal course they do. But should Government of India actually play a proactive role in the manner in which the Chinese Government plays for Chinese businessmen when they go out into the world? These are very important questions. These are questions which the Government alone cannot take a call on. But these are questions on which we as a people, the nation must take a view, that this is something that is not only legitimate but this is something that is an obligation of people and Government to promote interests of India through participation of private sector, which is why I am very glad that I am sitting next to Mr. Anil Agarwal hopefully speaking the same language.

Within this general conception comes in the whole idea about to what extent and how much time and effort we put in an organization like Shanghai Cooperation Organization, more bilateral visits, etc., these are all very important questions. We are very happy with Prime Minister's visit to Tehran in August last year for the NAM Summit. I think the sort of outreach and the kind of reception that he received and the welcome that he had received from the Iranian Government was remarkable.

We are looking forward to the Joint Commission not in a few months, in a few weeks hopefully, to take these issues that you have talked about, forward. I think there is a major issue about how we enhance trade, given the rupee arrangement is not entirely satisfactory because the demand from Iran of goods and items to be supplied still remains low. We did have a working arrangement through a Turkish bank but that presumably also has to go.

But again, let me underscore, and this is an important distinction, we accepted and we were participants and we were part of the sanctions imposed by the United Nations. But we did not accept the sanctions imposed unilaterally by the United States. And this has not caused a major concern between us and the United States because the United States accepts that despite being strategic partners, we can disagree. The important thing I think that India has been able to register with the world is the ability to agree to disagree. I think this is a very critical dimension of India's foreign policy that the world has recognized and I think something on which we can build further.

As I said, we will have the next JCM in the near future and I am sure that many of the conclusions that you have drawn here, we will be able to take those conclusions in a meaningful way and use them in preparation for our JCM which will take place, as I said, in the next few weeks, and benefit from them generally also in our understanding of the larger region, and I hope in getting some inputs from people like you about how proactive India should be in the world.

People hope that we will be more active; people nudge us to be more active. Our aloofness has been in a sense useful to us to give us the profile that we have today that we are trusted, that

people are comfortable, that people trust us. Greater engagement is, therefore, advisable or not advisable. Greater engagement will bring its own risks and the greater engagement will bring its own awards. Both of these dimensions I think need to be kept in mind as you look at the specifics of the position that we need to take.

With these few words, I thank you very much for inviting me here today. I believe that we need to have much greater interface, interaction between the Ministry of External Affairs and organizations like yours. I think we must have many more organizations from other parts of the country as well. I am very glad that you are a Kolkata-based organization because we tend to be a little bit incestuous in being confined to Delhi-based organizations. So I am very encouraged that in Kolkata and Mumbai and also in Bangalore, there are a lot of very outstanding people establishing themselves across the country.

I hope that we will see, if I borrow the phrase, "a thousand flowers bloom" in the country how organizations like yours are making our job in a way easier and in a way more difficult.

Thank you very much.

*Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, <http://www.mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/21246/External+Affairs+Ministers+speech+at+Global+India+Foundation+Conference+on+Irans+Eurasian+Dynamic+Mapping+Regional+and+ExtraRegional+Interests>*

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## MULTILATERAL ISSUES/REGIONAL ISSUES

### n. INDIA AT THE ORGANISATION OF ISLAMIC COOPERATION (OIC)

#### 30. Official Spokesperson's response to a query on the OIC Communiqué, New Delhi, 9 February 2013.

In response to a query regarding the OIC Communiqué, the Official Spokesperson said:

"Our view on the irrelevance of the OIC's declarations in regard to Jammu & Kashmir has been stated in the past and is well known. We reject them completely and see no reason for further comments in the matter."

An extract from the Communiqué:

... We reaffirm our principled support to the people of Jammu and Kashmir for the realization of their legitimate right to self-determination, in accordance with relevant UN resolutions and aspirations of the Kashmiri people. We express our concern at the indiscriminate use of force and gross violations of human rights committed in Indian Occupied Kashmir (IOK) by Indian security forces which have resulted in killing scores of innocent and unarmed civilians as well as injuring hundreds of others including women, children and elderly. We call upon India to allow

the OIC Fact-Finding Mission and the international human rights groups and humanitarian organizations to visit Jammu and Kashmir...

For the entire Communiqué, see:

[http://www.oic-oci.org/external\\_web/is/12/en/docs/final/is12\\_fc\\_rev2\\_en.pdf](http://www.oic-oci.org/external_web/is/12/en/docs/final/is12_fc_rev2_en.pdf)

*Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, <http://www.mea.gov.in/media-briefings.htm?dtl/21155/Official+Spokespersons+response+to+a+query+on+the+OIC+Communique>*

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## o. INDIA AND GCC

### **31. Reenergize Negotiations for Concluding India-GCC FTA Talks: Anand Sharma, Dubai, 17 February 2013.**

The Union Minister for Commerce, Industry & Textiles Anand Sharma, in a bilateral meeting with Sheikha Lubna Bint Khalid Al Qasimi, Minister of Foreign Trade, UAE, in Dubai today, said that despite of the fact that UAE is India's top partner amongst the GCC countries and the second largest trading partner for India in the world after China, "the bilateral trade does not reflect the full potential and can be further exploited to mutual advantage of both the countries." Sharma conveyed to Qasimi that UAE should take the lead in "reenergizing the negotiations for concluding the India-GCC FTA talks", which have stalled for a while.

Sharma was also concerned of the matter that although the bilateral trade between the two regions has grown tremendously, the capital flow between the regions has remained miniscule. Speaking on the same issue, Sharma emphasized the opportunities for increased investments from UAE in India, especially in infrastructure sector such as power and utilities, roads and highways, ports, aviation, telecommunications and urban infrastructure. He also assured that "India is committed to strengthening and expanding cooperation with UAE in other sectors such as construction, downstream products in the petroleum and natural gas sector, agriculture and food processing, science & technology, renewable energy, IT, education, training, health and financial services."

Highlighting the fact that India is a major exporter of textiles, Mr. Sharma also hoped that the UAE Government would give a special concessional treatment to textile imports from India.

Mr. Sharma also expressed the desire of Indian companies to invest in UAE in energy intensive manufacturing, infrastructure, services, tourism and hospitality, pharmaceuticals and healthcare, financial services, agro-based value chain and education. Along with this, Mr. Sharma conveyed to the UAE Minister India's desire to "take part in UAE's projects in the oil, railways, construction and other sectors."

*Source: Press Information Bureau, New Delhi, <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx?relid=92273>*

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**Note: One Lakh= 100,000**

Compiled by Alvite N

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