

INDIA SPEAKS

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No. 47

June 2013

BILATERAL ISSUES

a. IRAN

1. Joint Press Statement on 17th India-Iran Joint Commission Meeting, Tehran, 4 May 2013.

The 17th Session of the India-Iran Joint Commission was held in Tehran on 4 May 2013. The Session was co-chaired by Dr. Ali Akbar Salehi, Foreign Minister of Islamic Republic of Iran and by Salman Khurshid, External Affairs Minister of India.

External Affairs Minister of India Salman Khurshid called on the Iranian President, H.E. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. He also had meetings with H.E. Dr. Ali Akbar Velayati, Advisor to the Supreme Leader and H.E. Dr. Ali Larijani, Speaker of the Iranian Majlis.

The two sides discussed bilateral and regional issues of mutual interest. They discussed Indian participation in Chahbahar Port project which will provide connectivity with Afghanistan and will give an impetus to Afghanistan's economic development. They further examined the developing situation in Afghanistan and agreed to remain in regular contact. They reaffirmed their support to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Afghanistan. The two sides also reiterated the importance of greater connectivity between Russia, Central and South Asia through the International North South Transport Corridor (INSTC).

They emphasized the importance of enhancing cooperation in expanding trade and banking relations and agreed to study the prospects of joint investment in both countries. The two sides, while noting their capabilities in the industrial sector, agreed to diversify their cooperation in this regard.

On developments in Syria, both the countries strongly expressed deep concern on the continuing and unabated violence and called upon all sides in Syria to abjure violence and resolve all issues peacefully through discussions taking in to account the aspirations of people of Syria. In this regard, they supported the Geneva Communiqué which includes the Six-Point Plan of Kofi Annan and welcomed the efforts of Joint Special Envoy Lakhdar Brahimi.

H.E. Salman Khurshid inaugurated the Indian Cultural Centre in Tehran on 3 May 2013.

During the visit, the two sides also signed the following Memorandum of Understanding (MoUs):

- MOU between Institute of Standards and Industrial Research of Islamic Republic of Iran (ISIRI) and Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS).
- MOU between the Foreign Service Institute, Ministry of External Affairs, Republic of India and School of International Relations, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Islamic Republic of Iran.
- MOU between the Government of Republic of India and the Government of Islamic Republic of Iran on cooperation in the field of water resources management.

Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, <http://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/21652/Joint+Press+Statement+on+17th+IndiaIran+Joint+Commission+Meeting>

2. India-Iran Shipping Joint-Venture, New Delhi, 6 May 2013.

Question:

Will the Minister of Shipping be pleased to state?

- (a) Whether the Government has any proposal to wind up the 39 year old entity with United Nation Sanctions on Tehran crippling operations of the India-Iran shipping joint venture;
- (b) If so, the details thereof; and
- (c) If not, the reasons therefore?

Answer

Minister of Shipping (G.K. Vasan)

(a) & (b): Irano-Hind Shipping Company (IHSC) is a Joint Venture between Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Lines (IRISL), Tehran and the Shipping Corporation of India Ltd. (SCI). The proposal for its dissolution has been approved by the Government.

(c): Does not arise.

Source: Lok Sabha (House of the People), Unstarred Question No. 6279 asked by Sukender Reddy Gutha

<http://164.100.47.132/LssNew/psearch/QResult15.aspx?qref=141084>

3. Joint press statement on Visit of Iranian Delegation, New Delhi, 27 May 2013.

H.E Rostam Ghasemi, Minister of Oil of Islamic Republic of Iran visited India for discussions with his counterpart, Dr. M. Veerappa Moily, Minister for Petroleum & Natural Gas, Government of India. In the meeting, the two delegations reviewed on-going cooperation in the hydrocarbons sector.

The Indian refiners have a long-standing relationship with the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC). During the visit, the Iranian side encouraged the Indian side to increase its crude purchase. The Indian side explained that it would encourage companies to maintain their engagement in terms of crude oil purchase, taking into account their requirements, based on commercial and international considerations.

The two countries also discussed the marine insurance charged by the Iranian insurance companies for shipment of oil to India and arranging ships for carrying out the voyage.

They also discussed the issue of reinsurance cover for the composite insurance of Indian refineries, which has recently affected crude purchase from Iran.

Both agreed to address the trade balance between the two countries. Dr. Moily requested his Iranian counterpart to consider sourcing more goods from India to rectify the trade balance. The Iranian contingent agreed to consider this request.

Both sides further agreed to discuss outstanding issues related to the development of Farzad B gas field and to continue the cooperation in supply/ purchase of crude oil and resolve any outstanding issues of mutual interest.

Source: Press Information Bureau, New Delhi,

<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx?relid=96248>

b. KUWAIT

4. Indian workers detained in Kuwait, New Delhi, 8 May 2013.

Question:

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

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

Answer

Minister of Overseas Indian Affairs (Vayalar Ravi)

(a) & (b): As per information given by the Kuwaiti authorities, around 2,000 Indians were arrested on 19 September 2012 for alleged visa violation. After verification/ checking of records, around 1,750 were released, and the rest were deported.

(c): Officers of the Embassy were in regular contact with the local authorities as well as the detained workers for securing their release or facilitating their return to India.

(d) & (e): As the 'Kafala' (Sponsorship) system is an existing system in an independent, sovereign country, Kuwait. It is for the potential emigrants to consider whether they would like to migrate under such conditions or not.

Source: Lok Sabha (House of the People), Unstarred Question No. 6732 asked by P. Karunakaran,

<http://164.100.47.132/LssNew/psearch/QResult15.aspx?qref=142145>

5. Islamic Monuments of India Photography exhibition, Kuwait, 12 May 2013.

The Embassy of India, Kuwait in association with National Council of Arts, Culture & Letters organized an exhibition of Photographs of Islamic Monuments of India by Benoy K Behl, Art - Historian & Photographer at Al-Edwani Hall, Dahiyat Abdullah Al-Salem.

India is an enchanted land, watered by streams of compassionate philosophies since ancient times. There are flourishing communities here of the Islamic, Christian, Zoroastrian and Jewish faiths, as well as of the Hindu, Buddhist, Jain and Sikh faiths that were born here. There is a great cosmopolitan heritage of India's culture and art.

India has a vast, rich and varied heritage of Islamic architecture. These monuments are a great treasure of our cultural heritage and are of particular value as they reflect India's artistic and cultural links with many other countries.

The Mughal monuments are very beautiful and are well known. Besides presenting these, this exhibition also shows the exquisite mosques and Dargahs of Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Kashmir and other parts of India. Far more than in the North of India, it was in the Deccan that India received the cultural and artistic influences of Persia and of the Arab world. The many exquisite monuments of the Deccan display the confluence of cultures which took place here.

A view of the rich Islamic heritage of India is presented in this exhibition through the eyes of renowned photographer Benoy K. Behl. He is a film-maker, art-historian and photographer who are known for his tireless and prolific output of work over the past 31 years. He has taken over 34,000 photographs of Asian monuments and art heritage, made a hundred documentaries on art history; his exhibitions have been warmly received in 24 countries around the world.

His films, including 26 documentaries on 'The Paintings of India' and 26 documentaries on 'The Sculpture of India' have been nationally telecast on prime time in India. Behl has been invited to lecture by most of the important universities and museums around the world, which have departments of Asian art. His book on 'The Ajanta Caves' is published by Thames & Hudson, London and Harry N. Abrams, New York.

The exhibition was inaugurated at 1900 hrs on 21 May 2013. The exhibition shall be kept open till 27 May 2013 from 0900 hrs to 1230 hrs and 1700 hrs to 2100 hrs. All are cordially invited to the exhibition.

Source: Embassy of India, Kuwait,

<http://www.indembkwt.org/ShowNews.aspx?ID=237&SECTION=1>

6. Exhibition of Photographs of Islamic monuments of India, Kuwait, 22 May 2013.

An Exhibition of Photographs of Islamic Monuments of India by Benoy K Behl, Art - Historian & Photographer was inaugurated by Mohammed Al-Asoussi, Asst. Secretary General for Art & Theatre Sector, National Council of Culture, Arts & Letters at 1900 hrs on 21 May 2013 at Al-Edwani Hall, Dahiyat Abdullah Al-Salem. The exhibition has been organized by the Embassy of India, Kuwait in association with National Council of Arts, Culture & Letters and will remain open up to 27 May from 0900 hrs to 1230 hrs and 1700 hrs to 2100 hrs.

The inauguration was attended by Kuwaiti dignitaries, Ambassadors from a number of countries, art lovers & members of the Indian community in Kuwait.

Source: Embassy of India, Kuwait,

<http://www.indembkwt.org/ShowNews.aspx?ID=238&SECTION=1>

C. LIBYA

7. ITEC Program for the year 2013-2014, Tripoli, 2 May 2013.

As part of its programme to help developing and friendly countries, the Government of India has increased the scholarship slots to 30 under its technical and economic cooperation ITEC programme to New Libya for the year 2013-14 to impart training to the Libyan professionals.

The training courses under this programme are fully funded by the Government of India and include several vital sectors like IT & Telecommunication, Management, SME/ Rural development specialized courses, Technical courses, Environment and Renewable Energy English language etc. The most sought after courses are in the field of Information Technology and Linguistics (English). Training is imparted to Government officials in areas such as Finance & Accounts, Audit, Banking, Education Planning & Administration, Parliamentary Studies, Crime Records, Management, Environment, Journalism etc. The programme, which consists of 280 short term, medium term and long term courses, would be conducted by app. 45 reputed

institutions in different parts of India. Details of the above courses can also be seen on Embassy's website www.indianembassy.ly

In addition Government of India also offers scholarships under the India Africa Forum Summit and for academic studies under the scholarship scheme of the Indian Council of Cultural Relations (ICCR).

To supplement the efforts of Libyan Government in capacity building the Indian Government will be setting up "Vocational Training Centre" in Libya.

Source: Embassy of India, Tripoli,

<http://indianembassy.ly/index.php?mact=News,cntnt01,detail,0&cntnt01articleid=47&cntnt01pagelimit=5&cntnt01returnid=15>

8. H.E. Anil Trigunayat's meeting with H.E. El Habib Al Amin Minister of Culture of State of Libya, Tripoli, 20 May 2013.

H.E. Anil Trigunayat Ambassador of India to Tripoli called on H.E. Habib Mohamed Al-Amin Minister of Culture & Civil Society to discuss ways and means for enhanced cooperation in the field of culture in accordance with the Agreement on Cultural Cooperation between the two countries.

India-Libya share great cultural values following the age old Indo-Arab Interactions and rich heritage. Both countries are ancient civilizations.

The Honourable Minister extended fullest cooperation to the holding of 'Days of India' in Libya during October 2013 and also invited Indian artists and performers to participate in the year of 'Arab Culture' in Tripoli during 2014. The Minister also expressed interest in the field of scholarships and training program for Libyans in the area of Film Production. Ambassador also stated that a 'Work Plan' for cultural exchanges will be worked out soon and that he looked forward to also host a Libyan Cultural Troupe in India.

Earlier in the day Ambassador called on H.E. Dr. Sadat Elbadri, Chairman of Tripoli Local Council and discussed the organizational details of the proposed 'Days of India' in Tripoli which would include performance by a 10 member Folk Dance Troupe, Film Festival and an Exhibition on Calligraphy based on the 'Holy Quran'. Dr. Elbadri was very pleased with the initiative and extended fullest cooperation to make this a success.

Source: Embassy of India, Tripoli,

<http://indianembassy.ly/index.php?mact=News,cntnt01,detail,0&cntnt01articleid=48&cntnt01pagelimit=5&cntnt01returnid=15>

d. QATAR

9. Visit of P. Chidambaram, Finance Minister of India to the State of Qatar, Doha, 15 May 2013.

P. Chidambaram, Honourable Finance Minister of India is scheduled to pay an official visit to the State of Qatar on 19 May 2013. During his visit, Honourable Finance Minister of India will have meetings with H.E. Yousef Hussain Kamal, Minister of Economy and Finance of Qatar and other high dignitaries. He will also interact with Qatari business leaders.

Finance Minister is visiting Qatar in the framework of the excellent relations and regular exchange of high level visits between India and Qatar. The visit is aimed at further strengthening bilateral cooperation between the two countries to mutual benefit.

Source: Embassy of India, Doha,

http://www.indianembassyqatar.org/press_release.php

10. Visit of P. Chidambaram, Finance Minister of India to the State of Qatar, New Delhi, 19 May 2013.

P. Chidambaram, Finance Minister of India paid an official visit to the State of Qatar on 19 May 2013 in the framework of the excellent relations and regular exchange of high level visits between the two countries.

The Finance Minister of India and Yousef Hussain Kamal, Minister of Economy & Finance of Qatar held discussions related to India-Qatar bilateral cooperation in various areas including investments, banking and finance, energy, aviation, and travel and tourism.

Minister Kamal hosted a luncheon in honour of the Finance Minister of India. The luncheon was attended by Chairman of Hassad Food, CEOs of Qatar Airways, Qatar Holding, Qatari Diar and Qatar National Bank, and other invitees.

The Finance Minister also had an audience with His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, the Emir of Qatar, in the presence of the Minister of Economy and Finance, and the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of Qatar.

The Finance Minister P. Chidambaram conveyed the warm greetings of the President and the Prime Minister of India to the Emir and said that the State Visit of the Emir to India in April 2012 had imparted fresh momentum to the historically friendly ties and growing bilateral cooperation between India and Qatar.

He further conveyed the admiration of the Government and people of India for the strides being made by Qatar in various areas under the Emir's Vision 2030, and underlined India's keenness to further expand partnerships with Qatar in diverse areas to the mutual benefit of both sides. He also thanked the Emir for the welfare of the Indian community in Qatar.

The Emir reciprocated his warm sentiments and noted the vast potential to further expand India-Qatar cooperation to the mutual benefit of both sides. He assured his government's support to the efforts being made to deepen and broaden the areas of engagement discussed between the two Finance Ministers and encouraged both sides to actively follow up on the discussions held during the recent visit. He further expressed appreciation for the large, diverse, vibrant and highly regarded Indian community in Qatar.

Finance Minister P. Chidambaram addressed an Investors Meeting, organized jointly by Embassy of India and Doha Bank, at which Chairmen/CEOs of several Qatari companies and Heads of the local operations of Indian companies and banks participated. He underlined the robustness of the Indian economy, India's vast potential and distinctive advantages as an investment partner and the other opportunities in India for business enterprises from Qatar. He also informally interacted with prominent Qatari business leaders at a dinner hosted in his honour by Ambassador of India on 18 May.

The Finance Minister visited the impressive complex of Hamad International Airport (HIA) – Doha's new airport – on a tour graciously conducted by Akbar Al Baker, CEO of Qatar Airways and HIA. He also visited the renowned Museum of Islamic Art in Doha.

Source: Embassy of India, Doha,

http://www.indianembassyqatar.org/press_release.php

e. SAUDI ARABIA

11. Meeting of the India – Saudi Arabia Joint Group to discuss labour issues, 1 May 2013.

All Indian workers who have travelled to Saudi Arabia legally will be allowed to regularize their visa status, get new jobs or to return to India if they chose to register voluntarily with the Saudi authorities during the three months grace period announced by His Majesty the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques. This was among the issues discussed at the Joint Group meeting held on 1 May 2013 at the Saudi Ministry of Labour. Deputy Minister for Labour Affairs Ahmad S. Al Humaidan, Deputy Minister for International Affairs Dr. Ahmed F. Al Fahaid and Deputy Minister for Labour Relations Ziyad I Alsaigh received the team led by Sibi George, Minister/Deputy Chief of Mission.

The Joint Group will continue their discussions in the next meeting. The Joint Group was set up during the discussions between Adel Fakeih, Minister of Labour of Saudi Arabia and Indian delegation led by Minister for Overseas Indian Affairs Vayalar Ravi in Jeddah on 28 April. The Joint Group is mandated to discuss all issues pertaining to the welfare of the Indian community in Saudi Arabia including immediate issues pertaining to implementation of Nitaqat programme and overstaying Indian workers. The Joint Group also discussed re-employment of those

overstaying Indian workers in Saudi Arabia by availing the facilities offered by the Ministry of Labour including services of the newly set up mega-recruiting companies.

The Embassy urges all Indians affected by the Nitaqat programme and those overstaying in Saudi Arabia to register their names at the Ministry of Labour website www.redyellow.com.sa. This site is being visited regularly by various Saudi companies to look for Indian workers.

The Ministry of Labour will be issuing shortly a series of measures aimed at helping the expatriate workers to regularize their stay in Saudi Arabia or to return to their countries. Those workers volunteering to utilize the three-month grace period and have no legal issues pending against them will not be blacklisted and would be allowed to return to Saudi Arabia with appropriate visas. They also need not go through deportation centres. The Ministry of Labour informed that those who have legal cases against them would need to settle such cases before their return to India. However, those who have legal cases against them could also change their jobs to new employers if they register voluntarily with the Ministry of Labour. The details are currently being worked out.

The Ministry of Labour clarified that in Saudi Arabia, it is illegal for any employer/companies to keep the passports or Iqamas of their employees. As per Saudi laws, it is the right of the employees to keep their passports and Iqamas. The Embassy has clarified to the Ministry of Labour that in case of workers who face difficulties to change their sponsorship due to non-availability of passports they would be issued new passports on a priority basis.

The Embassy of India urges all those affected by Nitaqat programme and those overstaying Indian workers to utilize the three-month grace period announced by the Saudi authorities to regularize their status or to leave the country. The Embassy has also been collecting Emergency Certificate (EC) applications from those Indians currently overstaying in Saudi Arabia so that their cases can be taken up with the Saudi authorities within the framework of applicable Saudi laws. The Embassy urges all Indian nationals who are unable to leave Saudi Arabia due to non-availability of Indian or Saudi documents to register with the Embassy within a month. The collection centres set up at the Indian Schools namely IIS Riyadh, IIPS Riyadh, IIS Dhammam, IIS Jeddah, IIS Jubail, IIS Buraidah, IIS Al-Khafji, IIS Taif, IIS Majmah and IIS Tabuk could be used for submission of EC applications. These could also be sent by Post/Courier along with a copy of the passport, resident permit and any other document to establish the Indian nationality to EC Section, Embassy of India, B-1 Diplomatic Quarter, PO Box 94387, Riyadh - 11693, Saudi Arabia.

The Embassy seeks the support of volunteers from the community, not necessarily social workers, to come forward to assist those affected by Nitaqat programme and all overstaying Indian workers. Indian professionals, teachers of Indian schools and others are urged to join the current campaign by the Embassy. Those ready to do voluntary services in any part of the country may send in their names, address, passport number and contact details to the Embassy by

5 May 2013. They may register through emails to wel.riyadh@mea.gov.in, with a copy to dcm.riyadh@mea.gov.in and hoc.riyadh@mea.gov.in. The Embassy would contact those volunteers and advise them on the next step in the process.

A meeting of the social workers and volunteers will be held at 1100 hours on 2 May 2013 at the Embassy of India premises in the Diplomatic Quarter to brief the outcome of the first meeting of the Joint Group and to get further inputs from Indian community in Saudi Arabia. All are welcome to attend.

Source: Embassy of India, Riyadh,

<http://www.indianembassy.org.sa/WebFiles/PRESSpercent20RELEASEpercent20MAYpercent201.pdf>

12. Exports of Sports Goods and Toys increases to Saudi Arabia by 56.60 per cent, Riyadh, 4 May 2013.

Indian exports of Sports Goods and Toys increased from Rs.508.05 lakhs in 2010-11 to Rs.795.61 lakhs in 2011-12 to Saudi Arabia registering an increase of 56.60 per cent. Saudi Arabia is the 14th largest importer of sports goods and toys in 2011-12 from India and it ranks 2nd largest importer in GCC after UAE. The growth in imports from India demonstrates the desire of Saudi citizens to buy quality goods from India for their children.

For further details, please visit the website of Sports Goods Promotion Council, a body established by Government of India:

<http://www.sportsgoodsindia.org>, <http://www.toysindia.in>

The contact details of Sports Goods Promotion Council are:

Head Office

1-E/6, Swami Ram Tirth Nagar, New Delhi - 110055 (INDIA) Tel: +91-11-47761100 Fax: +91-11-23632147

E-Mail: mail@sgepc.in

Website: <http://www.sportsgoodsindia.org>, <http://www.toysindia.in>

Regional Office

201 Shakti Nagar Jalandhar-144001 Tel: +91-181-2403734

E-Mail: ro@sgepc.in

For details about exporters of Sports Goods and Toys from India, Trade Wing in the Embassy of India may be contacted at trade.riyadh@mea.gov.in

Source: Embassy of India, Riyadh,

<http://www.indianembassy.org.sa/WebFiles/Presspercent20Releasepercent20percent20Sportspercent20Goodspercent20andpercent20Toys.pdf>

13. Press Release, Riyadh, 4 May 2013.

The Embassy continues to get enquiries from some companies in Saudi Arabia offering jobs for Indian nationals affected by Nitaqat programme. The Almarai Company, P.O. Box 8524, Riyadh 11492 has informed that they would like to recruit over 1500 Indian workers in different fields. These include managerial, technical, supervisory, operator and labour category workers. Those interested may send their CVs to crd@almarai.com or call at telephone number 01- 4700005. Almarai Company would also be holding open days for recruitment at their head office building in Riyadh next week.

This Embassy has seen some media reports attributed to some ‘associations’ in Saudi Arabia complaining that it does not recognize social groups. The Embassy would like to clarify that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Saudi Arabia has formally conveyed that establishment of any association of the communities residing in the Kingdom whether inside the premises of the Embassies or outside is not proper and in case there are such associations the Embassy should immediately initiate steps to abolish such associations. In view of this the Embassy does not recognize any association in Saudi Arabia and urge all Indian nationals in Saudi Arabia to respect laws of this country.

The Embassy welcomes the announcement by His Majesty giving three months grace period to correct the legal status of those affected by Nitaqat programme and urges all Indian nationals affected by the Nitaqat programme and overstaying Indian workers to utilize this grace period. In order to assist the Embassy in this campaign, the Embassy seeks the support of volunteers from the community, not necessarily social workers, to come forward to assist those affected by Nitaqat programme and all overstaying Indian workers. Indian professionals, teachers of Indian schools and others are urged to join the current campaign by the Embassy. Those ready to do voluntary services in any part of the country may send in their names, address, passport number and contact details to the Embassy. They may register through emails to wel.riyadh@mea.gov.in, with a copy to dcm.riyadh@mea.gov.in and hoc.riyadh@mea.gov.in. The Embassy would contact those volunteers and advise them on the next step in the process.

Source: Embassy of India, Riyadh,
<http://www.indianembassy.org.sa/Content.aspx?ID=790&PID=691>

14. Ambassador’s Message, Riyadh, 6 May 2013.

My fellow Indians,

Our Embassy in Riyadh and our Consulate in Jeddah are currently undertaking a major campaign aimed at helping our fellow Indians in Saudi Arabia in their efforts to regularize their stay or to return to our homeland with dignity. I thank the Custodian of Two Holy Mosques His Majesty King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al Saud for offering three months grace period to correct the visa status of those affected by the Nitaqat programme and for adopting a humanitarian approach to those overstaying Indians in this country. I urge all our fellow Indians in Saudi Arabia to utilize this grace period to correct their status. We live in a foreign land and we should respect and obey the laws of this country.

In our Embassy, we have been in constant touch with the Saudi authorities at all levels to request a humanitarian approach to those affected by Nitaqat programme and to help those Indians overstaying in Saudi Arabia. The Joint Group recently set up between the Ministry of Labour and the Embassy of India discussed all issues pertaining to the welfare of the Indian community in Saudi Arabia. It was conveyed to us that all Indians who travelled to Saudi Arabia legally will be allowed to regularize their visa status, get new jobs or to return to India if they register voluntarily with the Saudi authorities during the grace period. Those having legal cases against them have to settle the cases before they could get an exit. Our discussions with the Saudi authorities to finalize the modalities for regularizing the legal status and the return of those affected are continuing.

In our Embassy and in our Consulate we have launched a drive to collect Emergency Certificate applications from those Indians who do not have valid documents to return to India. This has evoked an overwhelming response with more than 60,000 Indians approaching the Embassy in Riyadh. We have opened Emergency Certificate application collection centres in all the Indian community schools in Saudi Arabia. We are preparing a databank which we will share with the authorities in Saudi Arabia to seek their permission for their exit and with Indian authorities to arrange rehabilitation programme for those returning Indians. We thank the media in Saudi Arabia for their support and constructive approach. I urge the support of volunteers from the community from all across Saudi Arabia to come forward and assist all overstaying Indians to regularize their status or return to India. Those willing to do non-remunerative voluntary service may register with the Embassy. We will contact you for the next step in the process. You may also visit Embassy of India website at www.indianembassy.org.sa and also the Embassy Facebook for regular updates.

Before I conclude, I would like to warn you about some elements who try to vitiate the atmosphere and try to exploit our people during their difficult times. Please beware of a few self-styled leaders, agents, experts and consultants who make money in the name of legal assistance and community service. I urge my fellow Indians not to fall victims to their exploitation, not to pay any money to anyone and report any such instance to the Embassy.

The Embassy is fully aware of its responsibilities towards the Indian nationals and that it will continue to address all issues of concern for the Indian community within the framework of Saudi laws and regulations, keeping in view our strategic partnership with this country and the welfare of more than two million Indians resident here.

Thank you.

Source: Embassy of India, Riyadh,

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

15. Press Release, Riyadh, 6 May 2013.

Ambassador released a message urging the Indian community in Saudi Arabia to participate in the campaign being currently undertaken with a view to help the fellow Indians affected by

Nitaqat programme and those overstaying in Saudi Arabia in their efforts to regularize their stay or to return to their homeland with dignity. A copy of Ambassador's message is attached.

The Ministry of Labour organized a briefing session by the newly constituted mega recruiting companies at the Embassy which was attended by Ambassador and senior officials of the Embassy. The briefing was organized as part of the ongoing engagement of the Joint Group comprising Embassy officials and Ministry of Labour set up recently with a mandate to discuss all issues pertaining to the welfare of the Indian community in Saudi Arabia including immediate issues regarding the implementation of Nitaqat programme and overstaying Indian workers. During its meeting on 1 May the Joint Group had inter-alia discussed re-employment of those overstaying Indian workers in Saudi Arabia by availing the facilities offered by the Ministry of Labour including services of the newly set up mega-recruiting companies. Six mega-recruiting companies made presentations at the briefing.

The Embassy continues to get enquiries from some companies in Saudi Arabia offering jobs for Indian nationals affected by Nitaqat programme. A list of companies is published on the Embassy of India Website at www.indianembassy.org.sa. Those interested may directly contact the companies.

The list of companies can be viewed at the link:

<http://www.indianembassy.org.sa/Content.aspx?ID=871&PID=691>

Source: Embassy of India, Riyadh,

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

16. Saudi Arabia's New Labour Policy, New Delhi, 8 May 2013.

Question:

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

- a) Whether the Government is aware that the new labour policy Nitaqat enforced in Saudi Arabia has adversely affected the job opportunities of Indians working there;
- (b) If so, the number of persons who have returned to India so far, as a result thereof, State-wise;
- (c) Whether the Government has held any talks with Saudi Arabia in this regard or proposes to send a delegation to Saudi Arabia for negotiations and if so, the details thereof;
- (d) The steps taken/proposed to be taken by the Government to help the affected persons in Saudi Arabia to return to their native places; and
- (e) Whether the Government has put any plan/scheme in place to rehabilitate those affected by the said Policy, and if so, the details thereof, State-wise?

Answer

Minister of Overseas Indian Affairs (Vayalar Ravi)

A Statement is laid on the table of the House. Statement as referred to in reply to the Lok Sabha Starred Question Ha. 586 for 8 May 2013 regarding Saudi Arabia's New Labour Policy.

(a) & (b): Up to 2 May over 18,000 applications for issuing Emergency Certificates (EC) to return to India had been received in the Embassy of India. It is reported by the Indian Mission in

Riyadh that the recent increase in the number of Indian workers seeking Emergency Certificates (ECs) is not much due to implementation of Nitaqat policy, which has been extended by another three months. It is due to a campaign launched by Saudi authorities against foreign workers, who do not meet the conditions for their stay in Saudi Arabia. This drive affects not only illegal workers from India, but also from all countries from where immigrant workers have come to Saudi Arabia.

(c); The Minister of Overseas Indian Affairs has led a Ministerial level delegation to Saudi Arabia from 27-29 April 2013 to exchange views with Saudi authorities on the welfare of the Indian workers and to install confidence in the Indian community there. The delegation urged Saudi authorities to address the issue on humanitarian grounds. The delegation also urged the Indian community in Saudi Arabia to fully utilize the three months` grace period on implementation of Nitaqat announced by Saudi authorities, to obtain alternative employment, and Indian workers, who do not have valid stay permit, to submit their requests for Emergency Certificates (ECs).

(d): On immediate basis, the Embassy of India, Riyadh and Consulate General of India, Jeddah were alerted on the need to attend to the situation, including issue of Emergency Certificates, where required, in time. Soon this regard, Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs has (a) waived off (ICWF) fund, (b) allowed Missions/Posts to bear cost of processing of EC of 40 Saudi Riyals per person, and to provide temporary accommodation, transportation, food etc. to Indian workers in need and (c) to make use of ICWF to meet small penalties/fines in respect of workers who may require such payments for being permitted to return to India.

(e): The Minister of Overseas Indian Affairs had convened a meeting with Ministers handling NRI affairs from the major labour sending States of Kerala, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, Punjab and West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, on 9 April 2013. In the meeting possibility of workers returning from Saudi Arabia in significant numbers, and its possible impact, including issues of rehabilitation, were discussed. States have been advised to take adequate steps in this regard.

Source: Lok Sabha (House of the People), Starred Question No. 586 asked by Jeetendra Singh Bundela and Anto Antony,

<http://164.100.47.132/LssNew/psearch/QResult15.aspx?qref=142183>

17. Press Release, Riyadh, 11 May 2013.

The Embassy of India in Riyadh welcomes the announcement on 10 May by Saudi authorities allowing expatriates to rectify any violations related to residence and work permits. The Embassy expresses its gratitude to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques His Majesty King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz al Saud for this announcement. The Embassy urges all Indian nationals in Saudi Arabia who are affected by Nitaqat programme and those who are in any violation related to residence and work permit to rectify such violations within the grace period announced by the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques His Majesty King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz al Saud.

The Embassy of India and the Consulate in Jeddah are fully equipped to help the Indian community in Saudi Arabia in this endeavour. The Embassy is currently studying the details of the measures announced by the Saudi authorities and would come up with regular advisories on any clarifications required.

The Embassy would like to inform the Indian expatriate community in Saudi Arabia the following:

A summary of the concessions announced by Saudi authorities on 10 May 2013 is available at www.indianembassy.org.sa (English, Hindi and Urdu). Shortly this will be published in other Indian languages also. For the summary, see:

<http://www.indianembassy.org.sa/WebFiles/Summerypercent20GENERALpercent20PROVISIONSpercent20OFpercent20CONCESSIONS.doc>. For Hindi and Urdu, see: <http://www.indianembassy.org.sa/Content.aspx?ID=872&PID=689>

The announcement of 10 May covers violations which took place before 6 April 2013. It is important to ensure that no further violations take place under any circumstances. Any Indian planning to travel to Saudi Arabia for employment should ensure that the visas on which he travels to Saudi Arabia does not violate any rules of this country. It is also important to ensure that the firm which sponsors them meets all the laws and regulations of Saudi Arabia. It is important to generate awareness in India on the new rules and regulations in Saudi Arabia.

The Embassy is in receipt of a large number of Emergency Certificate (EC) applications. It will continue to collect EC applications from those wanting to leave Saudi Arabia on exit. Those who have submitted EC applications will be issued ECs in due course after ascertaining from the applicant whether he wants to continue to work in Saudi Arabia availing the concessions announced by Saudi authorities on 10 May or to leave Saudi Arabia. Embassy will contact each EC applicant either through telephone or through the volunteers. As required Embassy will establish EC distribution Centres in various cities in Saudi Arabia.

There has been an overwhelming response to Embassy's request for volunteers to register with the Embassy. The Embassy will soon release the names of volunteers who have registered with the Embassy. It would also issue an advisory to the volunteers on how to help those Indians who wish to change their legal status or to return to India. The services of all volunteers are free of cost. No money may be paid to the volunteers for any services. All Indian Community Schools Management Committees, teaching and non-teaching staff have been urged to offer their services.

The Embassy continues to get requests from companies in Saudi Arabia offering jobs for Indians who wish to change their jobs. The list is available at <http://www.indianembassy.org.sa/>.

The Embassy has been approached by mega-recruiting companies which propose to recruit Indians who wish to change their sponsorship to these companies. A contact list of these mega

recruiting companies is available at www.indianembassy.org.sa. A list of companies which approached Consulate General of India, Jeddah is available at <http://www.cgjeddah.com/>

The Embassy has strengthened its 24-hour helpdesk with more people and more telephone lines. The telephone lines are 01 4884697, 01 4881982, 0501699879, 0501700106, 0501699895, 0501699894. Consulate General of India, Jeddah help line numbers are 02-2611483, 02-2614093, 0596810574.

Ambassador will hold a meeting with volunteers and Indian community workers at the Embassy premises at the Diplomatic Quarter in Riyadh at 1600 hours on 14 May. Consul General of India, Jeddah will hold a meeting of community workers at 1600 hours on 15 May. Another meeting of volunteers and community workers would be held at the International Indian School Dhammam at 1800 hours on 17 May. All volunteers, community workers and media are invited to attend these meetings.

Source: Embassy of India, Riyadh,

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

18. Embassy Releases Passports of Overstaying Indians, Riyadh, 13 May 2013.

The Embassy has received around fifteen thousand passports of Indian nationals from the Saudi authorities. Most of these passports have been surrendered by the sponsors of Indian workers to the Saudi authorities. The Embassy has today uploaded a list of these passports (Click to view or click here to view in XL- <http://www.indianembassy.org.sa/WebFiles/fm.xls>) on its website at www.indianembassy.org.sa.

These passports can be collected from the Embassy from 1800 hours to 2100 hours starting from 13 May to 18 May 2013 except on Friday. All Indian nationals who lost their passports may check their passport number from this list and approach the Embassy with their passport number, serial and packet number as given in the list. A copy of the passport may be brought along to collect the passport. Passport will be returned only to the holder in person and not to any representative.

Those who are unable to collect their passports directly may contact the Embassy on its helpline numbers 01 4884697, 01 4881982, 0501699879, 0501700106, 0501699895, 0501699894.

Source: Embassy of India, Riyadh,

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

19. Press Release, Riyadh, 13 May 2013.

Ambassador of India in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Hamid Ali Rao released a message to the Indian community in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The message captioned 'Reach out to Every Indian in Saudi Arabia' is also an advisory to Indian volunteers who registered with the Embassy in Riyadh and the Consulate in Jeddah to assist the Indians in Saudi Arabia to utilize fully the concessions that the Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia announced recently to correct

the legal status of expatriate workers in Saudi Arabia. The message is available at www.indianembassy.org.sa.

The Embassy also released a list of 400 Indian volunteers who registered with the Embassy till date (CLICK TO VIEW LIST-1 <http://www.indianembassy.org.sa/WebFiles/Listpercent201.pdf>; LIST-2<http://www.indianembassy.org.sa/WebFiles/Listpercent202.pdf>, LIST-3 <http://www.indianembassy.org.sa/WebFiles/Listpercent203.pdf> & LIST-4 <http://www.indianembassy.org.sa/WebFiles/Listpercent204.pdf>). The list is available at the Embassy of India website www.indianembassy.org.sa. This is the first list of volunteers and more names will be added subsequently. The teaching and non-teaching staffs of the Indian community schools in Saudi Arabia are also contributing in this service voluntarily. A meeting of the Embassy with the Indian volunteers and social workers will be held on 14 May at 1600 hrs at the Embassy premises at the Diplomatic Quarter in Riyadh. A similar meeting is being held at Indian Consulate in Jeddah at 1600 hours on 15 May and a third meeting at the Indian community school in Dhammam at 1800 hrs on 17 May 2013. All volunteers, social workers and media are welcome to attend.

Source: Embassy of India, Riyadh,

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

20. Press Release, Riyadh, 14 May 2013.

The Government of India has announced its decision to exempt Indians living in Saudi Arabia and having no travel documents to the payment of fees for issue of Emergency Certificates for one time travel to India. A Gazette of India notification has been issued on these lines on 13 May 2013. This waiver shall be applicable only for those EC applications made during the grace period announced by the Saudi authorities. Applicants desirous to avail this waiver of fee shall have to submit an additional application indicating their wish to avail this scheme. A format of the application for waiver of EC fee is at the Embassy of India website www.indianembassy.org.sa application. Those who have already applied for ECs can submit this additional application while collecting their ECs.

The Embassy has released a list of 2,528 Emergency Certificate applicants whose passports are available with the Embassy. The list is available at the Embassy of India website at www.indianembassy.org.sa. They may visit the Embassy at the Diplomatic Quarter in Riyadh from 1800- 2100 hours on any day till 22 May except on Fridays. A copy of the passport may be brought along to collect the passport. Passport will be returned only to the holder in person and not to any representative.

The Embassy has released a list of 169 passports available with the Mission from the ECs applied at Dhammam VFS office. The list is available at the Embassy of India website at www.indianembassy.org.sa. More lists of available passports will be released later. Embassy will open a passport distribution desk at the VFS visa outsourcing centre in Dhammam to distribute the passports these passports. EC applications will also be collected at this centre. The

distribution desk will open from 1800-2100 hours starting from 18 May including Fridays. A copy of the passport may be brought along to collect the passport. Passport will be returned only to the holder in person and not to any representative.

All Indian nationals from Jeddah and neighbouring areas who lost their passports may check their passport number from the list of passports released by the Embassy and inform the Mission on the helpline numbers or send an email to wel.riyadh@mea.gov.in, cons@cgijeddah.com, welfare@cgijeddah.com, conscw@cgijeddah.com with a copy to dcm.riyadh@mea.gov.in. Their passports will be issued from Jeddah Consulate on a date to be intimated by the Consulate.

The Embassy would like to issue the following clarifications on the concessions and services to be availed during the grace period. These clarifications are based on the information received by the Embassy officials during their interactions with the Saudi authorities at various levels. If there are any changes/clarifications on these points, it will be communicated through media releases:

THOSE WANTING TO LEAVE SAUDI ARABIA:

Those workers including domestic workers having valid passports and wanting to leave Saudi Arabia may approach Javazat directly to get their exit stamped and leave the country. They need not visit the Embassy. They should not pay any money or fee at Javazat for exit.

Those who do not have their passports may check whether their passports are available with the Embassy. The Embassy has released the list of passports available with it on the embassy website. They may collect their passports from the Embassy before approaching the Javazat to get an exit stamped on their passports and leave the country. They should not pay any money at the Javazat for exit.

Those who have expired passports may renew their passports within six months of expiry of their passports. They may approach the Javazat with renewed passports to get an exit. They should not pay any money at Javazat to get an exit.

Those who do not have their valid passports or have their expired passport or have their expired Emergency Certificates may approach the Embassy or Consulate for new Emergency Certificates. The Embassy in Riyadh and Consulate in Jeddah are collecting EC applications directly and also through various collection centres throughout Saudi Arabia. Indian volunteers registered with the Embassy can also collect EC applications and forward it to the Embassy. No money should be paid to anyone for EC related work. ECs will be issued after processing the applications. Embassy will open EC distribution centres as required.

Those who have expired passports can also apply for EC. If their passport is expired, within 6 months of expiry, they can even ask for a new passport.

Those who apply for EC have to have some document to prove their Indian nationality, which include: Passport copy, Indian Driving License, Aadhaar Card, Ration Card, Election Commission ID Card, PAN Card or any other Indian photo ID.

Those EC applications which are submitted without correct passport numbers or without a copy of old passport(s) would take more time to get an EC as their particulars have to be ascertained from their district authorities.

EC Application Forms are available, free-of-cost, on the Embassy website. It has also been published through various newspapers. Please do not pay any money to anyone for collecting EC Application Forms or getting ECs.

A list of EC applicants, who have applied at visa outsourcing centres, is being put up at these centres for the applicants to know about their application number for use as reference, while contacting the Embassy.

Those leaving Saudi Arabia on final exit from Javazat will not be banned from returning to Saudi Arabia on a new visa. They should not pay any money or fee at any Javazat / Tarhil in Saudi Arabia. Those who are not finger printed till date will be finger printed at Javazat for record and not for ban on their re-entry. Those who have legal cases against them can leave the country only after settling those cases.

Those labourers and domestic workers who are on Huroob could return to their country without any fine or penalty. They need to collect their passports or Emergency Certificates from the Embassy and approach Javazat in their cities for exit. They should not pay any money or fee at any Javazat / Tarhil in Saudi Arabia.

The Javazat will issue exit to all those approaching them with valid passports or Emergency Certificates, provided they approach with their Iqama number or their entry number. Those who do not have Iqama number or entry numbers could get an exit by giving a finger print to get the data on them from the system. The latter category may take more time to get an exit. The Javazat will give exit only for those who entered the country legally on a valid visa and those who were finger printed on arrival. There would be no payment of fee or money at the Javazat to get an exit.

THOSE WANTING TO TRANSFER THEIR JOBS:

Those labourers wanting to change to a new job may approach the labour office through their new employer. They do not need the permission of their former employer for such transfer. They need not visit the Embassy. They do not need their passport for such transfer.

All domestic workers who left their previous employer including Huroob and those who have expired Iqama can return to their previous employers or transfer their services to a new employer

as domestic worker without the permission of their previous employer. For this they need to approach the Javazat directly with the new employer.

All domestic workers who left their previous employer including Huroob and those who have expired Iqama can also transfer their jobs to a new employer in the private sector without the permission of the previous employer. They may approach the Labour office through their new employer. They do not need their passport to get the new job. They could obtain their passports from the Embassy later, after following the procedure.

Those domestic workers wanting to change to a new job in a company may approach the Labour office through the new employer. They do not need the permission of their former employer for such transfer. They need not visit the Embassy. They need their Iqama for the transfer, but do not need their passport for such transfer. They could obtain a passport from the Embassy later, after following the procedure.

All Huroob category workers can return to their previous employer or transfer their services to new employer without the permission of their former employer. They may approach the labour office through their new employer. They need not visit the Embassy. They need their Iqama for the transfer, but do not need their passport for such transfer. They could obtain a passport from the Embassy later, after following procedure.

Those overstaying Hajj or Umrah pilgrims who came before 3 July 2008 could go to Javazat with their new employer to get a job as domestic worker. Those who want to change to the job of a labour could approach the Labour office through the new employer and then visit Javazat. They can also get an exit without any payment of money.

Those passports which expired in the last six months can be renewed, if they wish to regularize their status. However, they must produce Chamber-attested document, giving details of new employer. They have to fulfil all passport application requirements, including payment of fee.

The Embassy and Consulate have been approached by various Indian and Saudi companies offering jobs for Indian workers. The Embassy and the Consulate regularly update the list of such companies in its website. Those interested may directly contact these companies. The Embassy has also been approached by mega recruiting companies recently set up with the license of Ministry of Labour offering jobs to Indian workers. Their details are also published at the Embassy of India, as well as the Consulate, website. The Embassy in Riyadh and Consulate in Jeddah cannot and will not get involved directly in the terms of employment contracts as it is a private matter between the employers and employees.

THOSE WANTING TO CHANGE THEIR PROFESSION:

All entities can correct the profession of their labourers regardless of their Nitaqat status with no fees. They can use Ministry of Labour e-service.

Domestic Labour can also change their profession with no fees. This has to be through Javazat.

THOSE WANTING TO GET NEW JOBS IN SAUDI ARABIA:

The concessions announced by the Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on 10 May cover residence and work permit violations which took place before 6 April 2013. It is important to ensure that no further violations by Indians take place under any circumstances

Any Indian planning to travel to Saudi Arabia for employment should ensure that the visa on which he travels to Saudi Arabia does not violate any rules of this country. There is no such thing called free-visas. It is also important to ensure that the firm which sponsors them meets all the laws and regulations of Saudi Arabia.

THOSE REFUSING TO RECTIFY STATUS OR LEAVE BY 3 JULY 2013

Anyone who fails to rectify their Iqama status or refuse to leave the country by 3 July 2013 will face arrest, jail sentence and a huge fine before their final deportation with a ban on their return. The penalties may be as high as SR 100,000 and up to 2 years in prison.

Entities employing, accommodating or transporting illegal will be penalized.

VOLUNTEER SERVICE

The Embassy has released a list of 400 Indian volunteers who registered with the Embassy. The list is available at the Embassy of India website www.indianembassy.org.sa. The teaching and non-teaching staffs of the Indian community schools in Saudi Arabia are also contributing in this service voluntarily. An advisory has been issued to all volunteers registered with the Embassy.

The Volunteers are urged to inform every Indian present at small business houses, labour camps, supermarkets, grocery shops, restaurants, saloons, market places, farms etc on the concessions offered by the Government of Saudi Arabia and on the urgency of the issue in view of the grace period which ends on 3 July. They are also urged to help Indians in need to brief all Indians on the decision of the Saudi authorities to intensify inspections after the grace period and the penalties and jail sentences one would face for violation of Saudi labour laws. These voluntary services should be undertaken within the framework of the Saudi laws and regulations.

The Volunteers are also advised to visit the labour offices, Javazat offices and Tarhil offices in all cities to provide assistance to those Indians wanting to avail the concessions announced by Saudi authorities. It is important to reiterate that no money or fee should be paid at the Javazat for getting an exit.

The Volunteers are urged to visit Embassy of India website www.indianembassy.org.sa regularly for updates. They are urged to pass on these updates to all their contacts through emails, bulletins and social media network.

The Volunteers are urged to generate awareness in India that any Indian planning to travel to Saudi Arabia for employment should ensure that the visas on which he travels to Saudi Arabia does not violate any rules of this country. There is no such thing called free-visas. It is also important to ensure that the firm which sponsors them meets all the laws and regulations of Saudi Arabia.

Embassy has not authorized anyone to collect money on behalf of the Embassy. If anyone hears any volunteer or social worker charging any fee or money for their services from any one please bring this matter immediately to the attention of the Embassy. This may be communicated to wel.riyadh@mea.gov.in with a copy to dcm.riyadh@mea.gov.in . Such persons will face action against them.

EMBASSY OF INDIA HELP DESK

The Embassy 24-hour helpdesk telephone lines are 01 4884697, 01 4881982, 0501699879, 0501700106, 0501699895, 0501699894. Consulate General of India, Jeddah help line numbers are 02-2611483, 02-2614093, 0596810574.

Any clarifications, suggestions or comments may be forwarded to wel.riyadh@mea.gov.in , cons@cgijeddah.com , welfare@cgijeddah.com with a copy to dcm.riyadh@mea.gov.in.

Source: Embassy of India, Riyadh,

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

21. Press Release, Riyadh, 17 May 2013.

It has come to the notice of the Embassy that a significant number of Indians who obtained Emergency Certificates (EC) from the Embassy during 2010 and 2011 could not return to India. The Embassy of India in Riyadh and the Consulate in Jeddah would revalidate their unutilized ECs issued during 2010 and 2011 for a period of three months as an exceptional measure to facilitate their departure to India utilizing the concessions announced by Saudi authorities. The immigration authorities in India have also been sensitized appropriately to ensure smooth entry of the re-validated EC holders to India.

The Embassy in Riyadh and Consulate in Jeddah will continue to collect EC applications directly and also through various collection centres throughout Saudi Arabia. Indian volunteers registered with the Embassy can also collect EC applications and forward it to the Embassy. However, no fee should be charged for this purpose from the applicant. The ECs will be issued free of cost for those who submit an application seeking waiver of fee. ECs will be issued after processing the applications. Embassy will open EC distribution centres as required.

Those who apply for fresh ECs have to have some document to prove their Indian nationality, which include: Passport copy, Indian Driving License, Aadhaar Card, Ration Card, Election Commission ID Card, PAN Card or any other Indian photo ID. Those EC applications which are submitted without correct passport numbers or without a copy of old passport(s) would take

more time to get an EC as their particulars have to be ascertained from their district authorities. EC Application Forms are available, free-of-cost, on the Embassy website. It has also been published through various newspapers.

The Embassy will shortly issue a schedule for distribution of ECs and renewal of ECs in Riyadh, Dammam and at other places.

Source: Embassy of India, Riyadh,

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

22. Schedule of delivery of Emergency Certificates (Out-pass), Riyadh, 18 May 2013.

The Embassy would start verification and delivery process of Emergency Certificates (ECs) for all Indian nationals who have applied for ECs at the Embassy and at other collection centres all across Saudi Arabia starting on 20 May 2013. The schedule currently announced is for the first batch of delivery of 12,000 EC applications received in Riyadh and nearly 3,000 EC applications received in Eastern Province. The schedule for verification and delivery of subsequent batches of applications will be announced shortly.

The verification of those applications submitted at Embassy of India, Riyadh (Diplomatic Quarter) will be from 1730 hours onwards starting on 20 May. Please note that only those with token numbers mentioned for the dates below will be allowed after 1730 hours on the dates indicated.

Token number issued for applications submitted at the Embassy	Verification of applications for delivery, revalidation of old ECs and submission of applications for fee waiver
1-2000	Monday, 20 May 2013
2001-4000	Tuesday, 21 May 2013
4001-6000	Wednesday, 22 May 2013
6001-8000	Thursday, 23 May 2013
8001-10000	Saturday, 25 May 2013
10001-12000	Sunday, 26 May 2013

The verification of those applications submitted at IIS Dammam and VFS Centre in Dammam will be from 1730 hours onwards at IIS Dammam starting on 20 May as per the token numbers and dates mentioned below.

Token number issued for applications submitted at Dhammam	Verification of applications for delivery, revalidation of old ECs and submission of applications for fee waiver
D1-D560(IIS, Dhammam)	Monday, 20 May 2013
VFS1 - VFS 500	Tuesday, 21 May 2013
VFS501- VFS1000	Wednesday, 22 May 2013
VFS1001-1500	Thursday, 23 May 2013
VFS1501-2000	Saturday, 25 May 2013
VFS2001-2310	Sunday, 26 May 2013

The schedule of verification for delivery and the list of applicants with token numbers have been uploaded at the Embassy of India website www.indianembassy.org.sa. The list would also be displayed at the IIS Dhammam and VFS Centre at Dhammam.

Those who are in possession of unutilized ECs with expired validity may approach the Embassy or IIS Dhammam for revalidation of their expired ECs. Those who have valid passports need not come to the Embassy. They may approach the Javazat/Tarheel for final exit.

The Embassy would like to reiterate that anyone who obtains ECs from the Embassy will have their current passports cancelled. They would not be able to travel out of India on such passports.

Source: Embassy of India, Riyadh,

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

23. India Tourism Road Show in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 19-22 May 2013, Riyadh, 11 May 2013.

Embassy of India in Riyadh and India Tourism Office are jointly organizing an India Tourism Road Show in Saudi Arabia from 19-22 May 2013.

India has established itself as a round-the-year destination. It is a destination for all seasons and for all reasons. India offers something for every traveller. It has a vast range of tourism destinations and products, from magnificent Himalayas in the north to the beautiful and serene backwaters of Kerala in the south, legendary Forts & Palaces of Rajasthan to world class heritage sites like Hampi (Karnataka), sprawling beaches of west coast to the calm lakes of east coast, from exotic one-horned rhinos of Kaziranga (Assam) to magnificent herds of elephants of

Bandipur (Karnataka), from magnificent lions of Gir (Gujarat) to royal tigers of Sunderbans (West Bengal), from variety of cuisine to exquisite shopping.

India has also emerged as a destination for wellness, medical and MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions) tourism. The wellness and medical tourism sector has been growing at the rate of 20 per cent per year. The Indian systems of medicine like Ayurveda, Yoga, Siddha and Unani are some of the most ancient systems of medical treatment in the world.

India has a number of world-class hotels, resorts and trains. India has also evolved itself as a luxury destination offering the ultimate luxury services to the high end travellers. Indian destination management companies are offering door-to-door services to such high end travellers. The luxury trains of India offer a unique tourism product. These luxury trains provide excellent amenities to tourists besides visits to various tourist places. Some of these are: Royal Rajasthan, Palace on Wheels, Golden Chariot, Maharaja Express and Deccan Odyssey.

With world-class polo clubs, golf courses and sports facilities, India is a world-class sports destination. It is a shoppers' paradise with a wide range of jewellery items and other products.

In India, every traveller will find what he/she is seeking in life. And, India's latest Campaign 'Find What You Seek' has been woven around this theme.

The Middle East, and particularly the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, is one of the main source markets for inbound tourism in India. During 2011, around 26,000 Saudi nationals visited India registering, a growth of over 12 per cent over the previous year.

India had conducted three Road Shows in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in January 2012 which received overwhelming response from the local tourism and travel industry members, and resulted in enhanced cooperation in tourism sector between the two countries. To build up on these efforts, the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, in association with the Embassy of India, Riyadh and Consulate General of India, Jeddah, is once again holding Tourism Road Shows in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as per the following schedule:

Road Show in Jeddah on 19 May 2013 at Hotel Hilton

Road Show in Riyadh on 21 May 2013 at Hotel Sheraton

Road Show in Dammam on 22 May 2013 at Hotel Sheraton

The Indian delegation to these Road Shows is led by Parvez Dewan, Secretary in the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India. He is accompanied by leading destination managers, tour operators, hoteliers, airlines, State Governments from India. Through these Road Shows, an effort is being made to update the Saudi Arabian tourism stakeholders with latest information on Indian tourism policy, destinations and products.

Recently, Government of India has lifted the restriction of two-month gap for entry of foreign nationals, including those from Saudi Arabia, between the two visits on tourist visa. This decision has facilitated travel of international tourists to India.

The Embassy of India in Riyadh and India Tourism are very happy to hold the Road Shows in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for taking tourism cooperation between the two countries to the next level.

India Tourism, Dubai, U.A.E - Tel: +971-4-2274848; Fax: +971-4-2274013; e-mail: goirto@emirates.net.ae or visit www.incredibleindia.org. For local inquiries please contact Embassy of India, Riyadh Tel: - 2811696; E-mail:- cul.riyadh@mea.gov.in

Source: Embassy of India, Riyadh,

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

24. Visit of External Affairs Minister to Saudi Arabia, 25-26 May 2013, New Delhi

External Affairs Minister Salman Khurshid will visit the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on 25-26 May 2013 at the invitation of the Foreign Minister of Saudi Arabia, His Royal Highness Prince Saud Al-Faisal.

It will be Salman Khurshid's first bilateral visit to Saudi Arabia and to the region as External Affairs Minister of India. He will hold discussions with his Saudi counterpart on bilateral, regional and international issues. He is also expected to call on the leadership of Saudi Arabia and will carry a personal letter from the Indian Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh to the Custodian of the two Holy Mosques His Royal Highness King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz al Saud.

Saudi Arabia is one of India's most valued partners. The path breaking visit of King Abdullah to India in January 2006 and the landmark visit of Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh to Saudi Arabia in February 2010 transformed India's relationship with Saudi Arabia. The "Delhi Declaration" issued during the visit of King Abdullah to India of January 2006 provided a roadmap for deepening bilateral political and economic engagement and the "Riyadh Declaration" issued during the visit of Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh in February 2010 elevated the India-Saudi Arabia bilateral relationship to a strategic partnership.

Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, <http://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/21725/Visit+of+External+Affairs+Minister+to+Saudi+Arabia+May+2526+2013>

25. Press Release, Riyadh, 21 May 2013.

Ambassador of India Hamid Ali Rao met Deputy Minister for Interior Dr. Ahmed Al Salem at the Ministry of Interior of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on 21 May. They discussed all issues pertaining to the welfare of the Indian community in Saudi Arabia. This includes facilities for immigration and 'exit' for Indian nationals approaching the Saudi authorities. They reviewed the modalities in implementing the 'concessions' announced by the Government of Saudi Arabia for overstaying expatriates to correct their legal status or to return to their homeland without facing

any penal action. Ambassador briefed the Minister on the efforts being undertaken by the Embassy of India to fully utilize the 'concessions' during the grace period which ends on 3 July 2013.

Ambassador offered the services of the Indian volunteers to help the Indian community at the Exit section of Tarheel offices in various cities of Saudi Arabia, particularly for translation/interpretation to Indian languages.

On 20 May, at a meeting with Deputy Minister for International Affairs at the Ministry of Labour of Saudi Arabia, Embassy offered the services of Indian volunteers to help Indian community at the Labour offices in various cities of Saudi Arabia, particularly for translation/interpretation to Indian languages.

The Embassy has deployed officials at the Tarheel in Riyadh and at the Labour office in Riyadh to assist the Indian applicants approaching these offices. Indian volunteers are also urged to come forward to assist for translation/interpretation to Indian languages at these offices.

The Embassy is continuing the verification and delivery process of Emergency Certificates (ECs) for all Indian nationals who have applied for ECs at the Embassy and at other collection centres all across Saudi Arabia. The delivery of new ECs will start on 25 May in Riyadh and 27 May in Dammam. The schedule of verification for delivery and the list of applicants with token numbers have been uploaded at the Embassy of India website www.indianembassy.org.sa. Those who are in possession of unutilized ECs with expired validity may approach the Embassy or IIS Dammam for revalidation of their expired ECs. Those who have valid passports need not come to the Embassy. They may approach the Javazat/ Tarheel for final exit directly. The Embassy would like to reiterate that anyone who obtains ECs will have their current passports stand cancelled. They would not be able to travel out of India on such passports.

Source: Embassy of India, Riyadh,

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

26. Second Schedule of delivery of Emergency Certificates (Out-pass), Riyadh, 23 May 2013.

The Embassy has released second list of verification and delivery process of Emergency Certificates (ECs) for all Indian nationals who have applied for ECs at the Embassy and at other collection centres all across Saudi Arabia. The schedule currently announced is for the Second batch of delivery up to 24,000 EC applications received in Riyadh and above 3,700 EC applications received in Eastern Province. The schedule for verification and delivery of subsequent batches of applications will be announced shortly.

The verification of those applications submitted at Embassy of India, Riyadh (Diplomatic Quarter) will be from 1730 hours onwards. Please note that only those with token numbers mentioned for the dates below will be allowed after 1730 hours on the dates indicated. All other

services including submission of new EC applications and distribution of passports received from the Saudi authorities will be till 1730 hours.

Token number issued for applications submitted at the Embassy	Verification of applications for delivery, revalidation of old ECs and submission of applications for fee waiver
12001-14000	Monday, 27 May 2013
14001-16000	Tuesday, 28 May 2013
16001-18000	Wednesday, 29 May 2013
18001-20000	Thursday, 30 May 2013
20001-22000	Saturday, 1 June 2013
22001-24000	Sunday, 2 June 2013

The verification of those applications submitted at IIS Dhammam, VFS Centre in Dhammam and neighbouring places in Eastern Province will be from 1730 hours onwards at IIS Dhammam as per the dates mentioned below.

Applications submitted at Dhammam and neighbouring places	Verification of applications for delivery, revalidation of old ECs and submission of applications for fee waiver
VFS 2001- VFS 2500	Sunday, 26 May 2013
VFS 2501 - VFS 3000	Monday, 27 May 2013
VFS 3001- VFS 3500	Tuesday, 28 May 2013
VFS 3501- VFS 3700	Wednesday, 29 May 2013
IIS JUBAIL, IISJ 1 - 100	Thursday, 30 May 2013

All EC applications received at the Embassy directly and through volunteers, fax/post/courier has been accounted for and is being processed. The Embassy will release dates for the delivery and mode of delivery of these ECs shortly. All those applied for ECs will get their ECs in due course.

The schedule of verification for delivery and list of applicants with token numbers will be uploaded at the Embassy of India website www.indianembassy.org.sa

The list would also be displayed at the IIS Dhammam and VFS Centre at Dhammam.

Those in possession of unutilized ECs with expired validity may approach the Embassy or IIS Dhammam for revalidation of their expired ECs. Those who have valid passports need not come to the Embassy. They may approach the Javazat/Tarheel for final exit. The Embassy would like to reiterate that anyone who obtains ECs from the Embassy will have their current passports stand cancelled. They would not be able to travel out of India on such passports.

Source: Embassy of India, Riyadh,

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

27. Press Release, Riyadh, 24 May 2013.

I am happy to be here on the invitation of His Royal Highness Prince Saud Al Faisal, Hon'ble Foreign Minister of Saudi Arabia. This is my first visit to Saudi Arabia as External Affairs Minister.

The relationship between India and Saudi Arabia are bound by several centuries of trade and cultural linkages. In recent years, there has been a regular exchange of high-level visits which are still fresh in the hearts and minds of many Indians, including myself. Our relationship has immensely been benefitted from the wise leadership of our two countries.

The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques His Majesty King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud is a visionary statesman. Under his able leadership the Kingdom has attained considerable growth and prosperity. His Majesty plays a key role in the ensuring peace and stability in the region. His Majesty's visit to India in January 2006 is a landmark event in the history of India – Saudi relations. The 'Delhi Declaration' signed during His Majesty's visit to India and the 'Riyadh Declaration' signed during the visit of Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh in 2010 provided a forward looking roadmap and framework for a strategic partnership for our relations.

I will review with Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al Faisal, the progress we made in implementing the agreements reached during the visit of His Majesty to India and Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh to Riyadh. I look forward to have exchange of views with the leadership of Saudi Arabia on bilateral, regional and multilateral issues of common and mutual interest.

I am thankful to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques His Majesty King Abdullah for hosting over two million Indians in Saudi Arabia. Indians continued to be the most preferred community in Saudi Arabia for their hard work, discipline and law abiding nature. My visit is taking place at a time when Indian community in Saudi Arabia is engaged in an effort to utilize the three months grace period announced by His Majesty for the expatriates to correct their legal status or to return to their motherland without penal action and with dignity. I look forward to expressing my gratitude to the leadership of this country for adopting a humanitarian approach while

streamlining its labour market. I urge the Indian community in Saudi Arabia to utilize the grace period effectively.

Salman Khurshid

Minister of External Affairs,

Government of India

Source: Embassy of India, Riyadh,

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

28. Joint Press Conference, Riyadh, 25 May 2013.

Your Royal Highness Prince Saud Al Faisal, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I thank His Royal Highness Prince Saud Al Faisal for the invitation extended to me to visit Saudi Arabia. This is my first visit to Saudi Arabia as the External Affairs Minister of India. I had the privilege of visiting this country in the past both as a Minister and also a pilgrim to this Holy land.

India regards Saudi Arabia as one of our most valued strategic partners. We are bound by shared history and close and regular contacts that span several centuries. In modern times, each generation of our leaders have contributed to deepening this relationship. The High level visits between our countries in 1955, 1956 and 1982, have laid a very strong foundation to our relationship.

The visit of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques to India in January 2006 as Chief Guest at our Republic Day and the historic 'Delhi Declaration' we signed during that visit broadened our relationship and opened a new era of intense dialogue and cooperation. The 'Riyadh Declaration' signed during the visit of Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh in 2010 confirmed the joint commitment of our two countries to pursue "a new era of strategic partnership". I am happy that we have been able to further strengthen and diversify this partnership through regular high level exchanges and interactions.

The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques is a visionary leader who played a very important role in shaping this great country, pursuing peace and accommodation in the region and establishing an era of strategic partnership with India. I carry a personal letter from Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh to His Majesty.

I thank His Royal Highness Prince Saud Al Faisal for his leadership in guiding our bilateral relationship. Today we exchanged views on a number of bilateral, regional and multilateral issues of common and mutual interest. We reviewed the progress in the implementation of the Delhi Declaration and Riyadh Declaration, expressed satisfaction at the state of our bilateral relationship and discussed ways and means to further strengthen our strategic partnership.

We expressed satisfaction at the progress in our defence and security relations. The visit of Defence Minister of India in February last year, the first by an Indian Defence Minister, and the

exchange of other defence delegations have contributed in strengthening our defence and security engagement.

The security and stability in the Arabian Peninsula is closely linked to the security in South Asia. We discussed the menace of terrorism the world continues to face and agreed to further strengthen our counter-terrorism cooperation which is an essential element of the Riyadh Declaration we signed in 2010. Our cooperation would not only benefit our two countries but also contribute significantly to the stability and security of the entire region and beyond.

We held productive discussions on a wide range of regional and multilateral issues. Saudi Arabia is part of our extended neighbourhood. It is very important that we remain in constant touch on the developments in the region. We both have similar views on a large number of regional and global issues.

India and Saudi Arabia are two major countries in the region. Despite the global economic downturn our countries continue to grow. We expressed satisfaction at the steady increase in bilateral trade. I also pointed out the increasing Indian investment in Saudi Arabia and highlighted the opportunity for Saudi companies to invest in India and become partners in India's growth story. We agreed to further deepen our economic engagement by utilizing the enormous synergies between our two economies in the hydrocarbon sector and beyond.

We welcomed the regular meeting of the India - Saudi Arabia Joint Commission Meeting and agreed on the need for speedy implementation of its recommendations to strengthen our engagement. Information Technology, life sciences, pharmaceuticals, education, new and renewable energy are among the several areas where we hope to cooperate. There is huge potential for the private sector in both countries for deepening their business engagement. In this century of Asia, further enhancing economic cooperation between India and Saudi Arabia would benefit not only the peoples of our two countries, but the entire region.

I thanked His Royal Highness for hosting a large Indian community in Saudi Arabia. I expressed by gratitude to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques for the concessions that Saudi Arabia announced for expatriate workers to correct their status or return to their country without penal action. Indians are the most preferred community in Saudi Arabia due to their hard work and discipline. I pointed out the contributions of Indian Diaspora in the economic growth of India and emphasized the importance we attach to the welfare of the Indians abroad. We also emphasized the need to further deepen our people to people exchanges through youth exchanges and cooperation in the education sector.

I once again thank His Royal Highness for the invitation and his warm welcome to me and my delegation. We spent more than an hour speaking to each other and I greatly benefitted from the enormous experience that his Royal Highness has. We discussed the concerns of the region particularly Syria and also to remain in close touch to ensure that the cycle of violence is

addressed with sense of urgency and we move to a peaceful future. I have also personally extended an invitation to His Royal Highness to visit India at an early convenient date. I look forward to working with him to further expand and diversify our strategic partnership.

Thank You.

Salman Khurshid

Minister of External Affairs,

Government of India

Source: Embassy of India, Riyadh,

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

29. Ambassador's Message, 'Keep up the Good Work', Riyadh, 28 May 2013.

It has been more than two weeks since the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia announced a series of 'concessions' which allows overstaying expatriate workers to correct their legal status or to leave the country without facing penal action. I have been urging our community in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to work towards fully utilizing these 'concessions' so that 'no Indian is left uninformed in Saudi Arabia'. I am happy to note that our efforts have started yielding good results. The feedback I get is that all across the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Indian community is involved in working towards achieving this goal. The thousands of telephone calls and emails that the Embassy receives even from smaller towns of this vast land indicate that our community is working together as a team to help each other. We have also made considerable progress in putting across our concerns to the Saudi authorities. The Saudi authorities have informed me that many Indians have availed the 'concessions' available for changing their jobs through the Ministry of Labour. Many have changed their professions and many have got new jobs. But we need to do more.

External Affairs Minister Salman Khurshid during his meetings with the leadership of the Kingdom this week thanked them for the 'concessions' offered. He discussed the welfare of the Indians in Saudi Arabia with Crown Prince Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, Second Deputy Prime Minister Prince Muqrin bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al Faisal, Interior Minister Prince Mohammad bin Naif and Minister of Labour Adel Fakeih. He briefed the Saudi leadership on the efforts of the Indian community in fully utilizing these 'concessions'.

I also met the Governor of Riyadh Province HRH Prince Khalid bin Bandar bin Abdulaziz to brief him on the progress we made in utilizing these 'concessions'. We discussed all issues pertaining to the welfare of our community here. I had earlier met the Deputy Minister for Interior and briefed him on the difficulties that the community faces in availing the 'concessions' at the Javazat offices and Tarheels. My colleagues in the Embassy have been in constant touch with senior officials at the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Interior and Labour to get regular updates on the implementation of the 'concessions' and to sort out new issues that we confront routinely while availing these 'concessions'. We will continue to maintain our contacts with the Saudi authorities at all levels to brief them on the difficulties that we face in availing these

‘concessions’. This is a work in progress. We need to double our efforts, channelize our resources and continue to work with full determination to ensure that we maintain the momentum generated and achieve our target within the stipulated time framework. Together we will be able to make it happen.

I appreciate the immense contributions made by the volunteers on daily basis. They are giving their valuable time and energy to help their brothers in need. Many of our volunteers are working in groups and individually organizing small camps and briefing sessions all over the Kingdom. Many volunteers are visiting the Embassy regularly and work silently to help us update our database. Many are visiting Labour offices and Tarheels to assist Indians who need help. The fact that the Saudi authorities have requested the services of our volunteers indicate that the good work of our volunteers is well appreciated by the Saudi government. The translation/interpretation service offered by Indian volunteers all across the Kingdom is commendable. The media including the vernacular press is doing a great service to the Indians in Saudi Arabia. The Indian community schools here are helping the community by setting up help desks and EC application collection centres. I thank the members of the management committees of these schools, principals, teaching and non-teaching staff for their efforts. We have been able to reach out to many Indians through advertisement and fliers distributed through small business houses, labour camps, supermarkets, grocery shops, restaurants, saloons, market places, farms etc. I urge the volunteers to keep up their good work.

We still have to go a long way. Next two weeks are crucial to our success. We hope to complete the process of issuing ECs to all those wanting to leave the country within the next two weeks. Then our focus would be on their ‘exit’ without facing any penal action. I have always urged that no money should be paid to anyone to get travel documents. I repeat this here again. The volunteers are undertaking non-remunerative and voluntary services. No money should be paid to anyone. The authorities of Saudi Arabia have also reiterated that no money should be paid at the Labour offices, Javazat offices and Tarheels to avail the ‘concessions’. The ‘exit’ from Saudi Arabia is free. No money should be paid to anyone outside Tarheels to get an ‘exit’. I urge the volunteers to spread this message all across the Kingdom among the Indian community.

Please contact us through our helpline numbers 011 4884697, 011 4881982, 0501699879, 0501700106, 0501699895, 0501699894 at Embassy of India in Riyadh and 02-2611483, 02-2614093, 0596810574 at the Consulate in Jeddah. Please continue to send us emails. As mentioned in earlier messages, it may not be possible for the Embassy officials to reply to each of the thousands of e-mails that we receive every day. But we take note of each mail and take up the issues raised through the mails with the authorities concerned both in India and in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. We will do all that we can do to fully utilize the ‘concessions’ offered by the authorities here. This is an opportunity to correct the legal status or to leave the country without facing penal action. Let us avail this to the fullest possible.

Thank you.

Source: Embassy of India, Riyadh,
<http://www.indianembassy.org.sa/Content.aspx?ID=790&PID=691>

30. Press Release, Riyadh, 28 May 2013.

Ambassador of India Hamid Ali Rao today (May 28) called on Governor of Riyadh Province Prince Khalid bin Bandar bin Abdulaziz Al Saud.

Ambassador briefed him on the efforts of the Indian community in Saudi Arabia in fully utilizing the 'concessions' announced by the Saudi authorities for overstaying Indians to correct their status or to leave the country without facing penal action. They discussed all issues pertaining to the welfare of the Indian community in Saudi Arabia.

Source: Embassy of India, Riyadh,
<http://www.indianembassy.org.sa/Content.aspx?ID=790&PID=691>

f. SYRIA

31. India's explanation of vote delivered by Ambassador Asoke Kumar Mukerji, Permanent Representative at the United Nations Assembly - Resolution on Syria, New York, 15 May 2013.

Mr. President,

India remains deeply concerned at the unabated violence in Syria and the suffering it continue to cause to the Syrian people. The military approach pursued by various ideas to the conflict has undermined the efforts for a political solution to the crisis. Violence has assumed a serious sectarian nature, and terrorist groups, including al Qaida, have entrenched themselves. All these developments will have long-term repercussions for national, regional and international peace and security. Reports on the alleged use of chemical weapons are also deeply worrying.

We strongly condemn all violence in Syria as well as all violations of international humanitarian and human rights law, irrespective of who their perpetrators are. We condemn all attacks directed at women and children, civilians, UN peacekeepers and public institutions and infrastructure. We also condemn in the strongest terms possible all terrorist acts that have been and continue to be committed in Syria.

We are particularly concerned that UN peacekeepers have been repeatedly targeted by rebel groups and taken hostage, including on two occasions in the recent past. This is completely unacceptable. It is imperative that the sanctity of United Nations peacekeepers be respected by all sides. A clear signal must sent by the United Nations that such acts will not be tolerated and will attract the full weight of the international community against the perpetrators.

Since the beginning of the crisis in Syria, India has consistently called on all parties to abjure violence, dissociate themselves from terrorist groups, and pursue a peaceful and inclusive political process to address the grievances of all sections of Syrian society. We have also

contributed to mitigate the humanitarian impact of the crisis by providing assistance worth US\$ 2.5 million.

We believe that the Joint Communiqué of the Geneva Group adopted in June 2012 provides a good basis for resolution of the Syrian crisis through a Syrian-led political process that respects Syria's independence, territorial integrity and sovereignty involves all sections of Syrian society and meets their legitimate aspirations. The task of the international community, anchored in the United Nations, is to assist the Syrian parties in this process, without pre-judging its outcome. Also, it is important that further militarization of the conflict, including support for terrorist and armed groups, ceases forthwith.

These are the principles that have guided our consideration of the draft that the Assembly has just voted upon. Whether a group, any group, is the legitimate representative of the Syrian people or not can only be determined by the Syrian people, not this Assembly. Therefore certain provisions of this resolution can be interpreted as effecting regime change by sleight of hand. This is a dangerous precedent which we cannot acquiesce in. We would once again reiterate our position that the leadership of Syria is a matter for Syrians to decide themselves.

As we have said earlier, unilateral action of any kind will not resolve the crisis. It will only exacerbate the problem and cause greater instability and violence even beyond Syria's borders. We think that following the settlement of the conflict, Syrians themselves should establish accountability for crimes committed by Syria. This cannot be done by outsiders. We also believe that promotion of political dialogue requires engagement with all parties concerned, and calls for boycott of the government and support of the opposition will not help. Due to these shortcomings, Mr. President, we have abstained on the resolution.

India remains committed to support the efforts of the United Nations, including Joint Special Representative Lakhdar Brahimi, to resolve the Syrian crisis expeditiously through inclusive political dialogue among Syrian parties. We also welcome the recent decision by the Russian Federation and the United States to convene a meeting of the Action Group with the Syrian parties, and hope that all sides will engage seriously, realistically and unconditionally to resolve the crisis in the interests of the Syrian people, the region and the larger international community. I thank you.

For the resolution, see: <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs//2013/ga11372.doc.htm>

Source: Permanent Mission of India to the United Nations, New York, <http://www.un.int/india/2013/pmi36.pdf>

g. TUNISIA

32. Visit by Dr. Sutanu Behuria, Secretary, Department of Heavy Industry with BHEL team for interaction with African Development Bank on power projects in Africa, Tunis, 24 May 2013.

Secretary in the Department of Heavy Industries Dr. Sutanu Behuria, Ambassador Nagma M. Mallick, CMD of Bharat Heavy Electricals Ltd. met with Dr. Donald Kaberuka, President of the African Development Bank in Tunis on 21 May 2013.

Source: Embassy of India, Tunis, <http://www.indianembassytunis.com/African-Development-Bank.html>

33. Tunisia-India cooperation in Science and Technology to benefit Africa, Tunis, 24 May 2013.

Tunisia-India cooperation in Science and Technology to benefit Africa Two important meetings in the area of science & technology were held in Tunis on 23-24 May between India and Tunisia. A workshop on biotechnology and health sciences was held between Institut Pasteur, Tunis and the International Centre for Genetic Engineering & Biotechnology (ICGEB), New Delhi, in Tunis on 23 May 2013. The two delegations were headed by Prof. Hechmi Louzir and Prof. V.S. Chauhan respectively and discussions centred on technology transfer to Institut Pasteur on combating infectious diseases and achieving objectives of research and development in biotechnology for benefiting countries of the African continent.

India is providing technical assistance for strengthening institutions in Africa engaged in research and development in order to provide widespread benefit across countries of the African continent, under the India-Africa Science & Technology Initiative announced by Prime Minister of India Dr. Manmohan Singh at the India-Africa Forum Summit held in New Delhi in 2008. The African Union Commission has selected the Institut Pasteur in Tunis along with two other scientific research institutions in Benin and Gabon to work with the top Indian scientific institutions in order to exchange technological know-how for capacity-building, and hence this meeting. At this meeting, it has been decided that Institut Pasteur will be twinned with several leading laboratories of India towards capacity building in vaccination research and production.

India is today one of the leading countries of the world in the sector of biotechnology; it is the only country with WHO-certified capability of producing live tissue cultures and materials for use inside the human body. The ICGEB is the premier biotech research centre of India in this sector and Prof. Chauhan is a renowned scientist who has made major contributions in the fields of malaria vaccine, drug research and in design and synthesis of peptides of biological importance, including in vaccine designs for HIV and novel antibiotics.

The 3rd session of the Tunisia-India Joint Working Group in Science & Technology was held on 24 May 2013 in Tunis after the Workshop. The Tunisian delegation was headed by Prof. Slim Choura, DG of International Cooperation, Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research and the Indian delegation was headed by Dr. Arabinda Mitra. This meeting was held as part of the long-standing cooperation between India and Tunisia in the field of Science & Technology - the Inter-Governmental Agreement in Science & Technology was signed in 1995 and the current Programme of Cooperation, under which the two sides are meeting, was signed in December

2011. The bilateral Programme of Cooperation has identified several areas for bilateral cooperation, including biotechnology, material sciences, Information Science, renewable energy and geospatial mapping.

The Joint Working Group meeting discussed and selected Tunisian and Indian researchers for availing of joint funding for joint research proposals in diverse fields which will be carried out in the two countries. Both sides appreciated the increasing Tunisian participation in the prestigious CV Raman Fellowship Programme of the Government of India launched in 2010 especially for African researchers to promote scientific cooperation between India and Africa; as also the cooperation between Institut Pasteur of Tunisia and the ICGEB of India in the field of vaccines and drug development. While launching the 3rd edition of the Joint Call for research proposals, the two sides agreed that top priority would be given to provide support to joint research in frontier areas between Tunisia and India through mobility of researchers.

Dr. Arabinda Mitra is a well-known geologist who has worked in Antarctica and has planned and launched several multi-disciplinary experiments there. He is currently Advisor and Head of International Bilateral Cooperation Division of the Department of Science & Technology, Government of India, and is in-charge of India's international science, technology and innovation engagements with 42 countries.

The two teams called on Moncef ben Salem, Minister for Higher Education and Scientific Research and on Abdelletif al Mekki, Minister for Health and briefed them on the progress made in the two meetings.

Source: Embassy of India, Tunis, <http://www.indianembassytunis.com/benefit-Africa.html>

h. UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

34. Indian Trade Fair Dubai 2013 (ITF DUBAI 2013), Abu Dhabi, 23 May 2013.

The Indian Trade Fair would be held in Dubai in 2013. The initiative is supported by the Indian Ministry of Commerce and Industry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, Embassy of India in U.A.E and various other government organizations in India like EPC(s) and Chambers etc.

For more details and participation, see the links:

http://indembassyuae.org/drupal/sites/default/images/Page-2_0.jpg

<http://indembassyuae.org/drupal/sites/default/images/Page-3.jpg>

<http://indembassyuae.org/drupal/sites/default/images/Page-4.jpg>

<http://indembassyuae.org/drupal/sites/default/images/Page-5.jpg>

<http://indembassyuae.org/drupal/sites/default/images/Page-6.jpg>

Source: Embassy of India, Abu Dhabi,

<http://www.indembassyuae.org/drupal/node/874>

SPECIFIC ISSUES

i. HAJJ

35. Passport counters for Hajj pilgrims, New Delhi, 2 May 2013.

Question:

- (a) Whether Government proposes to set up passport counters in each district of the States for the convenience of Hajj pilgrims; and
(b) If so, by when this scheme would be implemented?

Answer

The Minister of External Affairs (Salman Khurshid)

(a) & (b) A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement referred to in reply to parts (a) and (b) of Rajya Sabha starred question no. 501 regarding passport counters for Hajj pilgrims

(a) & (b) No, Sir. There is no such proposal by the Government to set up Passport counters in each district of the State for the convenience of Hajj pilgrims. The Passport services to Hajj pilgrims continue to be delivered through the nation-wide network of 38 Passport Offices, which are supported by 77 Passport Seva Kendras. To facilitate speedy disposal of Passport applications of prospective pilgrims of Haj-2013, Passport Offices and Passport Seva Kendras set up special facilitation counters; earmarked appointment slots for intending Hajjis; coordinated with Police authorities to expedite Police Verification; organized Passport Melas during weekend and nominated nodal officers to monitor applications and their disposal. In spite of the mandatory requirement of possessing a valid Passport before the application date, approximately three lakh Hajj application forms were received by the Hajj Committee of India by the prescribed deadline of 30 March 2013 against the allocated Hajj quota of 1, 25,000.

Source: Rajya Sabha (Council of States), Starred Question No. 501 asked by Chaudhary Munabbar Saleem, <http://164.100.47.5/qsearch/QRresult.aspx>

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

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