

# INDIA SPEAKS

(Monthly Digest of Official Indian Statements on Middle East)

No. 49

August 2013

## BILATERAL ISSUES

### a. EGYPT

#### 1. Important Information for Indian Journalists, Cairo, 3 July 2013.

For all queries regarding travel of Indian Journalists to Egypt, please contact:

Abu Mathen George, Third Secretary (Press & Info)

Phone #: 0020-1283482229

E-mail: [abu.mathen@gmail.com](mailto:abu.mathen@gmail.com);

[infoemb@indembcairo.com](mailto:infoemb@indembcairo.com)

*Source: Embassy of India, Cairo,*

<http://www.indembcairo.com/portals/0/gallery/Important%20Information%20for%20Indian%20Journalists.pdf>

#### 2. Transcript of media briefing by Official Spokesperson, New Delhi, 3 July 2013.

**Question:** A few countries have issued travel advisories for Egypt. Are we concerned about our citizens in the country and have we had any discussions with the Government over the Constitutional crisis?

**Official Spokesperson:** A couple of things. It is not our practice to revert to advisories unless we deem the situation is so difficult that it makes it absolutely necessary for us to indicate that there is no need for Indians to travel, and in such cases we have. In this case we have not. However, our Ambassador there is in touch with the Indian community. As you are perhaps aware, there is an Indian community but not a very large one. The Mission has indicated to them the areas where these protests are taking place so that for the present they avoid those areas.

As regards the situation itself, this is a matter for the Egyptians to decide internally, and so we have not taken it up. If the question you asking us is whether this has been taken up bilaterally, the answer is no because it is not our practice and policy to intervene in matters which are essentially in the domain of internal jurisdiction of a country.

*Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, <http://www.mea.gov.in/media-briefings.htm?dtl/21901/Transcript+of+media+briefing+by+Official+Spokesperson+July+3+2013>*

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### **3. Official Spokesperson's response to a query on the situation in Egypt, New Delhi, 4 July 2013.**

The In response to a query on the situation in Egypt, the Official Spokesperson said:

"We are closely monitoring the evolving situation in Egypt. As the world's largest democracy, India was amongst the first countries to welcome the January revolution and the promise of genuine democracy in a large and important country like Egypt with which we have traditionally enjoyed close and friendly ties. India urges all political forces to abjure violence, exercise restraint, respect democratic principles and the rule of law and engage in a conciliatory dialogue to address the present situation.

We have about 3,000 Indian nationals in Egypt. In addition, we also have about 50 Indian companies in Egypt. Our Embassy in Cairo is in active and regular contact with all sections of the Indian community with the objective of ensuring their welfare."

*Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, <http://www.mea.gov.in/media-briefings.htm?dtl/21910/Official+Spokespersons+response+to+a+query+on+the+situation+in+Egypt>*

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### **4. Advisory for Indian community in Egypt, Cairo, 9 July 2013.**

Given the large-scale protests and clashes which have been observed in Cairo and other parts of Egypt in recent days, members of the Indian Community in Egypt are advised not to visit areas that have seen disturbances, particularly Nasr City, Tahrir Square, Presidential Palace, Cairo University and Nahda Square in Giza. Members of the Indian community are also advised to leave the area immediately on any signs of disturbance such as gathering of demonstrators and/or security force personnel. Taking Photographs of protests or stopping at trouble spots for a glimpse of a demonstration should also be avoided.

Since there is also likelihood of blockage of main thoroughfares, it is advised that the traffic situation may be ascertained before taking any route. At present, it is strongly advised to use the ring road to commute to and from the Cairo airport.

Indian Embassy is monitoring the situation closely and will continue to issue advisories from time to time. Indian Embassy and its officials can be contacted at any time on telephone numbers as follows:

DURING THE DAY: 0900-1700 hours

MOBILE NUMBERS:

01224855866 (Ram Kumar, Third Secretary)

01283471115 (Abu Mathen George, Third Secretary)

01283471112 (J.C. Pant, Counsellor)

DURING EVENING AND NIGHT: 1700-0900 hours

DIRECT NUMBERS: 02-27360556 & 02-27356168

GENERAL NUMBERS: 02-27363051 & 02-27360052

*Source: Embassy of India, Cairo,*

<http://www.indembcairo.com/portals/0/gallery/advisory.pdf>

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## **b. JORDAN**

### **5. Visit of the Honourable Minister of State for External Affairs E. Ahamed to Jordan, Amman, 3 July 2013.**

Minister of State for External Affairs E. Ahamed paid an official visit to Jordan on 2-3 July 2013 and transited Jordan again on 6 July 2013. During the visit, the Honourable Minister held discussions with Jordanian Prime Minister Abdullah Ensour and Foreign Minister Nasser Judeh separately on 3 July. While in Jordan he also met with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas on 2 July 2013.

*Source: Embassy of India, Amman, <http://indembassy->*

*[amman.org/visit\\_honble\\_minister\\_of\\_state\\_for\\_external\\_affairs.html](http://indembassy-amman.org/visit_honble_minister_of_state_for_external_affairs.html)*

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### **6. Visit of Srikant Kumar Jena, Minister of State (I/C-C&F), Amman, 11 July 2013.**

Minister of State for Chemicals and Fertilizers Srikant K Jena paid an official visit to Jordan from 8-11 July 2013. During his visit, he called on Prime Minister Abdullah Ensour and separately held talks with Jordanian Industry and Trade Minister Hatem Halawani and Jordanian Energy and Mineral Resources Minister Malek Kabarati on 9 July on issues of mutual concern and explored possibility of further cooperation in economic and trade sectors.

Jordan Phosphate Mines Company (JPMC) Chairman Amer Majali also hosted meeting with Indian Minister and accompanying delegation. The Ambassador was part of the Indian delegation.

*Source: Embassy of India, Amman,*

*[http://indembassy-amman.org/visit\\_honble\\_minister\\_of\\_state\\_for\\_chemicals.html](http://indembassy-amman.org/visit_honble_minister_of_state_for_chemicals.html)*

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## **c. KUWAIT**

### **7. Meeting of Community representatives held at Embassy of India with Officers of the Ministry of Interior, Kuwait, 1 July 2013.**

The Embassy of India organized a meeting on 30 June 2013 of representatives of various Indian Associations, Companies with large Indian employees and media with senior officers of the Ministry of Interior to address concerns of the community as a result of ongoing security checking by the authorities in Kuwait.

The interactive session with Brig. Gen Talal Marafie, Assistant Director General, Directorate General of Immigration, Col. Najeeb Al-Shatti, Assistant Director General, Immigration

Investigation Department & Col Adel Al-Hashash, Director, Public Relations Department, Ministry of Interior, State of Kuwait was informative and useful to clear a number of doubts and apprehensions of the community.

*Source: Embassy of India, Kuwait, <http://www.indembkwt.org/DispNews.aspx?ID=255>*

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#### **8. Visit of Dr. Montek Singh Ahluwalia to Kuwait, Kuwait, 7 July 2013.**

India's Deputy Chairman of Planning Commission Honourable Dr. Montek Singh Ahluwalia visited Kuwait from 1 to 3 July 2013 as the head of a high level delegation to promote India-Kuwait Economic relations particularly in the field of investments. During his visit to Kuwait, he held discussions with His Highness The Emir of Kuwait H.E. Sheikh Sabah Al-Khalid Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance H.E. Mustafa Jassim Al-Shamali, Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs H.E. Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Executive Director, Kuwait Investment Authority Farouk A. Bastaki and Kuwaiti Business Community at Kuwait Chamber of Commerce & Industry. He also held discussions the members of the Indian Business Council, Kuwait.

*Source: Embassy of India, Kuwait, <http://www.indembkwt.org/DispNews.aspx?ID=259&SECTION=1>*

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#### **9. Ramadan timing, Kuwait, 8 July 2013.**

During the Holy month of Ramadan, the office timings of the Indian Passport and Visa Service Centres of BLS International Visa Services Co., Kuwait, situated at (i) Emad Commercial Centre, Basement Floor, Ahmed Al Jaber Street, Sharq, Kuwait, and (ii) Mujamma Unood, 4th floor, Office No. 25-26 Mecca Street, Fahaheel, Kuwait, will be from 0800 hours – 1500 hours from Saturday to Thursday (i.e. six days a week). Tokens for submission of applications will be issued till 1400 hours only. Delivery of Passports and Visas will be from 1100 hours onwards till 1500 hours.

Embassy of India, Kuwait, will maintain its usual working hours.

*Source: Embassy of India, Kuwait, <http://www.indembkwt.org/DispNews.aspx?ID=258>*

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#### **10. Visit of Indian Minister of State for External Affairs, Kuwait, 8 July 2013.**

Honourable Minister of State for External Affairs of India, E. Ahamed visited Kuwait on 7 July 2013, during which he called on His Holiness the Crown Prince, H.E. the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior and H.E. the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs. His discussions covered regional issues, bilateral relations and concerns of the Indian community as a result of the ongoing security checks conducted by Kuwaiti authorities.

The Embassy of India also organized a meeting of representatives of the Indian community and media with the Honourable Minister at which he apprised the community representatives of his very good and meaningful discussions with the Kuwaiti authorities regarding the concerns of the Indian community.

*Source: Embassy of India, Kuwait,*

<http://www.indembkwt.org/DispNews.aspx?ID=260&SECTION=1>

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**11. Embassy of India- Holiday Notice, Kuwait, 31 July 2013.**

The Embassy of India will remain closed on Thursday, 15 August 2013, on account of Independence Day.

*Source: Embassy of India, Kuwait, <http://www.indembkwt.org/DispNews.aspx?ID=261>*

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## **d. LEBANON**

**12. Visit of Honourable MoS (EA) to Lebanon - 30 June-2 July 2013, Beirut, 3 July 2013.**

Honourable Minister of State for External Affairs E. Ahamed paid a bilateral visit to Lebanon from 30 June to 2 July 2013. During his talks with H.E. Adnan Mansour, Minister [caretaker] of Foreign Affairs and Emigrants, Government of Lebanon, he reviewed the gamut of bilateral relations and exchanged views on regional and global issues of mutual interest. The Minister also held detailed discussions with H.E. Michel Sleiman, President of the Republic of Lebanon, H.E. Nabih Berri, President of the Lebanese National Assembly and Prime Minister [caretaker] Najib Mikati and Prime Minister-designate Mr. Tammam Salam. This was the first high-level visit from India to Lebanon after many years. The last interaction took place when Special Envoy of Honourable Prime Minister C.R. Gharekhan, visited Beirut after the July 2006 Lebanon–Israel war for extending assistance to Beirut.

Lebanese dignitaries conveyed appreciation for the deputing of Indian troops with the UNIFIL forces in southern Lebanon. India's balanced and calibrated approach on Arab Spring developments including Syria, traditionally strong linkages with the Arab world and solidarity for the Palestine cause, strengthening of economic and commercial engagement and prospects of deepening ties through streamlining of Lebanese visa-issuance procedures for Indian tourist and business visitors to Lebanon and through entities such as the Association for Development of Lebanese Indian Relations [ADLIR] were taken up. The Lebanese leadership noted the interest of Indian energy majors like OVL India and Cairn India, which have already pre-qualified, to participate in Lebanon's first Licensing Offshore Natural Gas Round.

During the visit, the minister also signed a bilateral Educational Exchange Programme [EEP] with H.E. Hassan Diab, Minister [caretaker] of Education and Higher Education, Government of Lebanon for facilitating increased exchanges in this important sector.

*Source: Embassy of India, Beirut, <http://www.indianembassybeirut.org/news/view/18>*

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## **e. PALESTINE**

**13. Visit of India's Minister of State for External Affairs E. Ahamed to Palestine, Ramallah, 4 July 2013.**

Minister of State for External Affairs E. Ahamed paid an official visit to Palestine. He met the Prime Minister Dr. Rami Hamdallah, the Foreign Minister Dr. Riad Malki and the former Foreign Minister and Commissioner of the Fatah Foreign Relations Commission Dr. Nabil

Sha'ath. The Minister handed over a cheque of one million US dollar to Prime Minister Rami Hamdallah. This is the part of the budgetary support pledged by Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to Palestine during the visit of President Abbas to India in September 2012. Representative of India B.S. Mubarak, the Joint Secretary of the West Asia Division of the Indian Ministry of External Affairs Sandeep Kumar and the Director of Minister's Office Dr. Suhel Khan were also present during the visit of the Minister.

The minister also reviewed other projects being supported by India. During the meeting with the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, he discussed about various developments in the region and also enquired the progress in the peace efforts with Israel and discussed the ways and means to strengthen the bilateral relationship between India and Palestine.

Earlier on 2 July, Minister E. Ahamed also met President Mahmoud Abbas in Amman and discussed issues of bilateral interest.

*Source: Representative Office of India, Ramallah,*

<http://www.roiramallah.org/index.php/press-release?id=76>

## **f. SAUDI ARABIA**

### **14. Press Release, Riyadh, 1 July 2013.**

As the 3 July deadline approaches, Embassy of India reiterates its gratitude to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al Saud for the 'concessions' that provided opportunity to a large number of expatriates to correct their legal status by getting new jobs or changing their sponsorship/companies. It also provided opportunity to many overstaying Indian expatriates to obtain exit without facing any penal action and with no ban to return to Saudi Arabia. This shows the humanitarian approach that His Royal Majesty and authorities of this country have adopted on this issue.

The Indian Embassy has registered a significant number of overstaying Indians in Saudi Arabia and issued them with travel documents (Emergency Certificate) to facilitate their return to India. Many of them were able to obtain their exits from various Tarheels all across the Kingdom. Many of the overstaying Indian expats were able to correct their legal status in the Labour offices. The Embassy has kept the Saudi authorities at the highest levels in the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Interior and Labour informed about all issues pertaining to the welfare of the Indian community and also updated them on the progress in obtaining exit for those wanting to leave Saudi Arabia on final exit.

The Embassy has shared with the Saudi authorities at appropriate levels details of Indians who approached the Embassy to avail the concessions announced by Saudi authorities. The Embassy continues to follow-up with Saudi authorities on all the outstanding issues.

The Embassy would like to remind all Indian expats that it is confident that all issues regarding the welfare of Indians in the Kingdom will be addressed as per the Saudi laws and regulations.



The Embassy is fully aware of its responsibilities towards the Indian nationals and 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.

The Embassy officials deployed at the mobile helpline counters at Shumeshi Tarheel and Riyadh International Airport will continue to provide assistance to the Indians who approach these places. The helpline numbers of Indian Embassy team at Tarheel are 0546843866, 0546843894, 0546843836, 0546843746, and 0546843903. The helpline numbers of Indian Embassy team at Airport are 0546843922, 0546843919, 0546843734, 0546843750, and 0548981774. This is in addition to the 24x7 helpline numbers at the Embassy of India (011 4884697, 011 4881982, 0501699879, 0501700106, 0501699895, 0501699894). The Embassy officials deployed at Tarheel in Dhammam will also continue to operate. The large number of registered volunteers who have worked with the Embassy in assisting the community will continue to provide their services to all Indians in need.

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

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#### **15. Press Release, Riyadh, 2 July 2013.**

Embassy of India welcomes the extension of grace period announced by the Government of Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The Embassy expresses its gratitude to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques His Royal Majesty King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al Saud for adopting a humanitarian approach towards this issue. The Embassy also extends its gratitude to all concerned Saudi authorities for extending their wholehearted support and cooperation during this period. The Embassy urges the Indian community to fully utilize the grace period effectively.

The Embassy also expresses its gratitude to the registered Indian volunteers for offering their services by expending time and energy for helping their brethren in need. The Embassy appreciates the constructive and pro-active role played by the media. The Embassy also commends the staff of Indian Community Schools for rendering non-remunerative and voluntary services to the Embassy in this process. The Embassy would continue its efforts to address all the outstanding issues pertaining to welfare of the Indian community.

The Embassy urges all those Indians who have collected their Emergency Certificates and obtained 'exit' from Tarheels/Jawazats to leave the country immediately. Those who are in the process of obtaining 'exit' should utilize this opportunity and continue their efforts to get the same from Saudi authorities.

The Embassy is organizing a meeting of all registered volunteers at the Chancery premises on 3 July 2013, at 1700 hours. During the meeting, necessary course of action to be adopted in the days to come will be discussed.

The Embassy will continue its operations at Tarheels, labour offices and Riyadh airport. The Embassy officials deployed at these places can be contacted at the helpline numbers (Tarheel: 0546843866, 0546843894, 0546843836, 0546843746 & 0546843903; and Airport: 0546843922, 0546843919, 0546843734, 0546843750, and 0548981774). This is in addition to the 24\*7 Embassy helpline numbers (011-4884697, 011-4881982, 0501699879, 0501700106, 0501699895, 0501699894) which also continue their operations. The Embassy officials deployed at Dhammam will remain functional and registered volunteers in Eastern Province are requested to coordinate with them and render their assistance.

*Source: Embassy of India, Riyadh,*

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

## **16. Remarks by Cd'A at the Reception on the Visit of Secretary (MOIA) to Riyadh, Riyadh, 3 July 2013.**

Honourable Rajiv Mehrishi, Secretary of Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs, volunteers, distinguished guests, my dear colleagues,

On behalf of the Ambassador and members of the Mission let me welcome Secretary Mehrishi to this gathering. 3 July is an important day in the history of Indian community in Saudi Arabia. A partnership of the Embassy and the Community that we began a few months ago to fully utilize the 'concessions' announced by the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques His Majesty King Abdullah has completed its first phase today. We have achieved a lot together in the last few months. We still have a long way forward in the coming months.

Let me thank His Majesty the Custodian of Two Holy Mosques and the leadership of this country for adopting a humanitarian approach to the implementation of Nitaqat programme and providing an opportunity to all overstaying Indians to correct their status or to leave the country without facing penal action or any ban on their return to Saudi Arabia.

Under the leadership of our Ambassador Hamid Ali Rao, who is currently in India, the Embassy in Riyadh and our Consulate in Jeddah have been working 24x7 to fully utilize the grace period announced by His Majesty. As our Ambassador mentioned on earlier occasions, for this endeavour to succeed, we needed three major things: the support of the Indian community; the support of our government and leadership in India; and above all the goodwill of the Saudi government and its people.

In April the announcement of three month grace period came as a great relief to many of our countrymen. We gave it our best shot. Now when we stand at the end of the first phase of the grace period and look forward to the next phase, there is a lot which we can be proud of. The first and foremost is the active involvement of the community in all that we did. Whatever we have done, we did it as partners. We see a number of dedicated volunteers here. They came together as partners and worked together at the Embassy, at the Tarheels, at the Labour Offices, at our schools, at the streets and super markets and all across Saudi Arabia with one objective 'to



help their brothers and sisters' to fully utilize the grace period and concessions. I thank the volunteers and of course the media both print and electronic for their significant contributions. Without their wholehearted support we would not have been able to achieve what we achieved till date. Our Indian community schools have also been in the forefront of support. The teaching and non-teaching staff served as volunteers. I thank the Managing Committees, Principals, teachers and non-teaching staff for their contributions. I should mention the ladies who came forward to help their sisters in distress. They were silent workers who helped us in a big way.

We launched a campaign all across Saudi Arabia urging the people not to get panic. We urged those affected to correct their status or leave the country. We offered some legal assistance to those who faced complex problems in changing their sponsors. We strengthened our 24x7 helpline. We conducted regular meetings with the community workers in Riyadh and also met them in Dammam and Jeddah. Our officers and volunteers went to other cities in far flung places. We were approached by many Indian and Saudi companies offering jobs to Indians. This facility was used by many of my brethren. I thank the Saudi and Indian companies who came forward with this offer of assistance. I thank the Riyadh Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Riyadh Convention and Exhibition Centre for their support.

Ambassador and our officers held several round of meetings with senior officials in the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Labour and Interior. Each one of them thanked us for urging our community to utilize these three months effectively to correct their legal status. They congratulated us for the volunteer's work. We offered them the support and they welcomed it.

We had several rounds of interaction with the Indian community in Saudi Arabia. We wanted to get inputs from them on what the Embassy and Government of India can do to help our brothers and sisters in this country. We got the inputs which we shared appropriately with Saudi authorities. We need more inputs on pending issues. We will have more such interactions and our partnership with the volunteers will continue. This is a long term partnership with one objective – the welfare of the Indian community in Saudi Arabia. We will work together to help our brothers in distress and of course our sisters as well. We have a special cell in the Embassy to cater to the requirements of women and housemaids who approach the Embassy. We will not let anyone exploit our brothers or sisters in distress. We will get to the bottom of the issues. We will take every complaint seriously. We will discuss and explore ways and means to provide legal assistance to those deserving cases. We will continue our engagement with Saudi authorities at all levels.

The volunteers and the community now know the constraints under which the Embassy and Consulate work. We need to cater to all the Indians spread all across Saudi Arabia. Within our limited resources both in terms of manpower and infrastructure, we need to cater to all these places. This is when the support of our government back home matters. The Ministry of External Affairs and the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs were all partners in our endeavour. I thank

the Secretary of Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs for the support of his Ministry and his personal leadership on the issue. He met the Vice Minister of Labour and expressed our gratitude to the Saudi leadership. We had very fruitful discussions on how to utilize the next four months grace period.

India has a historical relationship with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and this relationship has been further reinforced and carried forward following the visits of King Abdullah to India in January 2006. The return visit of Prime Minister to Saudi Arabia in February 2010 elevated this relationship to strategic partnership. Both our countries have been able to make significant breakthroughs in our bilateral political, economic, defence and security relations. We have excellent bilateral relations which we value and want to strengthen. We have a large community of over two million, and of course growing, living in this country peacefully and happily. We are thankful to the leadership of this country for hosting them in this country. We would do nothing to violate any rules or regulations of this country. We would do everything to help our brethren in distress to correct their status or return to India with dignity.

With these words, on behalf of our Ambassador and on behalf of all present here, I welcome Secretary to Saudi Arabia. I thank all of you for having come today and, through you, we would like to reach out to all fellow Indians to work with the Embassy and to help our brothers and sisters in need.

Thank you.

*Source: Embassy of India, Riyadh,*

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

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### **17. Press Release, Riyadh, 11 July 2013.**

A meeting to discuss the way forward during the days and months ahead following the extension of the grace period till 3 November 2013 was held in the Embassy with the participation Embassy officials deployed at Riyadh Tarheel and a core group of registered volunteers who would be stationed at the Riyadh Tarheel to assist Indian workers to get their final exit. The meeting expressed its gratitude to the Custodian of Two Holy Mosques His Majesty King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al Saud and the leadership of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for granting this extension of grace period. The volunteers thanked the Ambassador for his leadership in guiding all Indians overstaying in Saudi Arabia to correct their status during the grace period. It was decided to further strengthen the efforts of the Embassy and the Volunteers to help Indians in Saudi Arabia to fully utilize the grace period.

The Riyadh Sumeshi Tarheel authorities have earmarked Sundays (during the extended grace period) for Indian nationals to obtain their 'exit' from the Tarheel in Riyadh. It is estimated that more than 40,000 Indian nationals have already obtained their 'exit number' from the Tarheel in Riyadh. In this regard the Embassy would like to bring the following to the notice of all Indians who would be approaching the Tarheel in Riyadh:

i. The Saudi authorities would be requested to allot at least 3 days in a week for allowing Indian nationals to get Exit. This was felt necessary as many of the Indians who obtained their Emergency Certificates from the Embassy are yet to get their final exit from Riyadh Tarheel.

ii. The Saudi authorities would be requested to have more counters with additional personnel at the Tarheel for servicing at least 2,000 Indian nationals on the allotted days;

iii. The Indian Embassy officials stationed at the Tarheel, along with registered volunteers who are being given photo IDs, would be issuing Embassy tokens to 2000 Indian nationals on the allotted day. The Saudi authorities have informed that from hereon they would be issuing a 'visa number' which would allow all those serviced on the day to leave for the airport without any delay. In the initial period, these Embassy tokens would be issued to those Indian nationals who are yet to receive their 'exit number' from the Tarheel.

iv. A new form would be distributed to all those Indian nationals who have been given an 'exit number' from the Tarheel, including those who were returned from the Airport. This is to make a database of those who obtained 'exit number' from Tarheel, but not being able to get final exit. This form would need to be filled out and would have to be handed-over to the registered volunteers / Embassy personnel at the Tarheel. The Saudi authorities have assured that expeditious action to permit all those who qualify for 'exit' in their system, and who bear an 'exit number' on their travel document (passport / EC), would be taken in the course of the next 2 weeks. In case the Saudi authorities are not able to permit those with 'exit number' to leave, the database would be handed-over to them, to ensure the departure of those who are given 'exit number'.

v. The Saudi authorities have informed that the Tarheels will function during the holy month of Ramadan from 2030 hours. All concerned Indian nationals are therefore advised to reach the Sumeshi Tarheel by 2030 hours from 14 July 2013.

3. The Embassy officials deployed at Riyadh Tarheel can be contacted at the helpline numbers 0546843866, 0546843894, 0546843836, 0546843746 & 0546843903.

*Source: Embassy of India, Riyadh,*

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

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### **18. Embassy Warns Community Against Touts and Illegal Agents, Riyadh, 18 July 2013.**

It has come to the notice of the Embassy that touts and illegal agents are trying to mislead and exploit Indian nationals by offering them to get them exit from Tarheels. The Embassy urges all its citizens not to get misled and exploited by such illegal agents and touts. The authorities of Kingdom of Saudi Arabia have made it clear that there is no fee for obtaining exit and the services at the Tarheels are free during the grace period.

Anyone demanding or paying any money to obtain exit is violating the rules and regulations of the Kingdom and are likely to face penal action. It has come to the notice of the Embassy that

some touts and illegal agents are misleading the applicants by issuing them with numbers claiming these numbers to be exit numbers. Many people who obtained such exit numbers through touts and illegal agents have since been returned from Airports. These touts and illegal agents as also those who obtained exit numbers through them are likely to face penal action under forgery which includes jail sentence and ban on return to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

All applicants who have obtained travel documents from the Embassy are urged to approach Tarheels directly for exit and not to be misled and cheated by touts and illegal agents. Anyone having information about such touts and illegal agents may share it with the Embassy for initiating appropriate action.

The Embassy urges all its citizens to follow the rules and regulations of Saudi Arabia. The Embassy is confident that all those who are eligible for exit will eventually get it from the Tarheels during the extended grace period. The Embassy officials deployed at Riyadh Tarheel can be contacted at the helpline numbers 0546843866, 0546843894, 0546843836, 0546843746 & 0546843903 for further assistance. The Embassy will also continue to pursue the matter with the concerned authorities in Saudi Arabia.

*Source: Embassy of India, Riyadh,*

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

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#### **19. Advertisement for the post of Clerk, Riyadh, 24 July 2013.**

Indian Embassy requires a Clerk in the pay scale of SR.3000-90-4350-130-5650-170-7350. Applicants should (a) hold a degree (b) be able to operate computers effectively (c) have a good command of spoken and written English. Interested candidates with requisite qualifications may send their CVs to (i) E-mail [hoc.riyadh@mea.gov.in](mailto:hoc.riyadh@mea.gov.in) (ii) P.O. Box No.94387, Riyadh-11693 within seven days of the publication of this advertisement.

*Source: Embassy of India, Riyadh,*

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

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#### **20. Indian Embassy to set up 'India Saudi Business Network', Riyadh, 24 July 2013.**

The Embassy of India, Riyadh, is set to launch a "Saudi-India Business Network (SIBN)" separately in Riyadh and Dhammam. The proposed Network will act as a catalyst to promote India-Saudi bilateral commerce and trade relations, investment, Business-to-Business interactions and exchanges. It would comprise of both Indian and Saudi businessmen, entrepreneurs, industrialists and members of business Chambers. The first meeting of the SIBN, Riyadh is scheduled for 2 September 2013, at the Indian Embassy Auditorium.

The India-Saudi Arabia trade relations have witnessed steady and remarkable growth in the last few years. Saudi Arabia is the fourth largest trade partner of India and the bilateral trade stood at US\$ 43.19 billion in 2012-13. Saudi Arabia is India's largest supplier of crude oil, accounting for 17 per cent of India's requirements. Saudi Arabia is one of the major markets in the world for Indian exports and is destination of more than 1.86 per cent of India's global exports. Saudi

Arabia is also the source of 6.35 per cent of India's global imports. For Saudi Arabia, India is the 5th largest market for its exports, accounting for 7.55 per cent of its global exports. In terms of imports by Saudi Arabia, India ranks 9th and is source of around 3.27 per cent of Saudi Arabia's total imports.

The two countries have an established framework of cooperation which includes Joint Commission Meetings (JCM), India-Saudi Business Council, etc. and hold regular meetings. According to Saudi Arabian General Investment Authority (SAGIA), 426 licenses were issued to Indian companies for Joint Ventures/100 per cent owned entities till 2010, which are expected to bring total investments of over US\$ 1.6 billion in Saudi Arabia. Several Indian companies have established collaborations with Saudi companies and are working in the Kingdom in the areas of designing, consultancy, financial services and software development. Saudi Arabia is also emerging as a big investor in India.

Membership of SIBN is open to all Indian and Saudi businessmen and entrepreneurs. Those Indian and Saudi companies recruiting Indians are also invited to join. Those interested may send their contact details, including their company profile to Surinder Bhagat, Second Secretary (Political, Information and Commerce), at e-mail ID: [com.riyadh@mea.gov.in](mailto:com.riyadh@mea.gov.in) & [pol.riyadh@mea.gov.in](mailto:pol.riyadh@mea.gov.in).

Suggestions/recommendations on SIBN can also be e-mailed to the Embassy.

*Source: Embassy of India, Riyadh,*

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

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## **g. SYRIA**

### **21. Press Release on Unauthorized use of Satellite Phones, Damascus, 23 July 2013.**

The Embassy of India in Damascus would like to bring to the notice of all concerned that Tata Communications Limited is permitted to provide Inmarsat services in India after a "no objection certificate" issued by the Department of Telecommunications on a case-to-case basis. Unauthorized use of Satellite telephony services in India like Thuraya, Iridium, etc. is illegal. Unauthorized use of Satellite phones in India by visitors, including tourists, will lead to prosecution under the Indian laws and the sets found will be seized.

*Source: Embassy of India, Damascus,*

<http://www.indianembassysyria.com/assets/files/pdf/PressRelease-SatellitePhones.pdf>

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## **h. TUNISIA**

### **22. Visit of Srikant K. Jena, Minister of State for Chemicals & Fertilizers, Government of India to Tunisia (11-13 July 2013), Tunis, 13 July 2013.**

Minister of State for Chemicals & Fertilizers Srikant k. Jena paid an official visit to Tunisia from 11 to 13 July 2013 to mark the coming into operation of the principal Tunisia-India joint venture, Tunisia-India Fertilizers SA (TIFERT). He was accompanied by Sudhir Mital, Permanent

Secretary, Department of Fertilizers and other officials. Minister Jena was received by HE Mehdi Jomaa, Minister of Industry of the Government of Republic of Tunisia. The two ministers together marked the coming into full operation of the TIFERT plant by a simple ceremony at the Ministry of Industry premises in Tunis in the presence of Secretary of State for Energy & Mining Nidhal Ourfly, Ambassador of India Nagma M. Mallick and TIFERT company officials, the Indian joint venture partners and media persons.

Earlier, Minister Jena had called on H.E Mohamed Moncef Marzouki, President of the Republic of Tunisia at the Presidential Palace in Carthage. Bilateral and regional issues of mutual interest were discussed.

Interactive and mutually useful discussions were also held between Minister Jena and the Minister of Health Abdellatif Mekki, Minister of Political Affairs Nouredine Bhiri, Minister of Economic Affairs Ridha Saidi and Minister of Investment Ridha Bettaieb

*Source: Embassy of India, Tunis,*

<http://www.indianembassytunis.com/Fertilizers.html>

## **i. UNITED ARAB EMIRATES**

### **23. Response to Media Reports on India- UAE (Abu Dhabi) Bilateral Air Services Agreement, New Delhi, 2 July 2013.**

There have been media reports over the last few days on the India- UAE (Abu Dhabi) Bilateral Air Services Agreement and on the Jet Airways-Etihad equity stake proposal. Some of these reports have inferred that PMO is playing a role in the Jet Airways-Etihad proposal.

The allegations in some media are factually incorrect and baseless. There is absolutely no disagreement within the government or between the Ministers and Prime Minister on the matter. The Prime Minister is neither washing his hands off the Bilateral Air Services Agreement nor is the Prime Minister's Office trying to do a U-turn on the issue now.

### **Two Different Matters - A Bilateral Air Services Agreement and a Private Equity Stake proposal**

There are two distinctly different matters being reported by the media. The first is the enhancement of seat entitlements under a Bilateral Air Services Agreement between India- Abu Dhabi. This is an inter-government agreement on bilateral air traffic seat entitlements and concerns the governments of the two countries. The second is an equity stake proposal between Jet Airways and Etihad which is a private agreement between two private entities. Such agreements, as they involve foreign direct investment, have to be as per the laws of the land and any government policies in place in this regard. Being distinct issues and between different categories of entities, the two matters need to be handled separately without mixing them up.

### **Seat Entitlements under the India - UAE (Abu Dhabi) Bilateral Air Services Agreement**



As far as the Bilateral Air Services Agreement is concerned, the facts are simple. Changes in seat entitlements under Bilateral Air Services Agreements are normally entered into by the Ministry of Civil Aviation with its counterparts in other countries. These changes are done through an MoU and do not need approval at higher levels.

However, on 22 April 2013, the Minister of Civil Aviation sought the Prime Minister's clearance for concluding an MoU with Abu Dhabi with a seat entitlement which was different from that recommended by an Inter-Ministerial Group. This is how the matter came up to the Prime Minister's level. The Prime Minister directed the Finance Minister to hold a meeting with the Ministers of Civil Aviation, External Affairs and Commerce & Industry to discuss the matter in detail. The Ministers met and agreed to a proposed mandate for the bilateral negotiations. The Minutes of this meeting, issued by the Finance Minister, refer to this and are annexed.

Later on the same day (22 April 2013), the Ministers met the Prime Minister to discuss the matter. This was attended by the National Security Advisor and the Principal Secretary to PM. In this meeting, the pros and cons of the enhanced seat entitlement were discussed, including the reasons for the mandate that was being finally given. At the end of the discussions, it was agreed to give an 'in-principle' go ahead to the negotiating team as per the formulation mentioned in the minutes of the earlier meeting.

The Prime Minister subsequently, on 26 April 2013, asked for the matter to be brought to the Cabinet. He even spoke to the Minister of Civil Aviation in this regard. On 29 April 2013, the PMO asked the Ministry of Civil Aviation formally to bring the matter to the Cabinet followed by a reminder on 20 May 2013. The note sent by Prime Minister's Office (PMO) is annexed.

Subsequently, a note was received in the PMO on the impact of Middle Eastern Carriers on our aviation sector. This was sent on 22 May 2013 to the Ministry of Civil Aviation for consideration.

When the Cabinet Note was received by PMO, it was felt that the Note should be reformulated to reflect the sequence of events and the discussions more accurately as its current formulation did not explain the detailed examination of the matter that had taken place on 22 April 2013. An accurate description of issues would make it easier for readers of the Cabinet Note to understand the multiplicity of issues that have a bearing on the matter and the reasoning behind the mandate. It was in this context that PMO sent a Note to the Ministry of Civil Aviation on 13 June 2013 to redraft the Cabinet Note. The note sent by PMO is annexed.

### **Jet Airways Etihad Equity Stake Proposal**

This is a matter between private parties which needs to be approved by the concerned agencies as per the policies and laws in place. This is not an agreement between governments and there is no

question of either backtracking from or disowning this proposal as this is not an agreement with the government.

### **Complaints about the Agreement**

The Prime Minister has received the following letters on the matter:

- i. Letter from Gurudas Dasgupta dated 1 May 2013
- ii. Letter from Prabodh Panda dated 2 May 2013
- iii. Letter from Sucharu Ranjan Haldar, MP dated 3 May 2013
- iv. Letter from Subramanian Swamy dated 29 May 2013
- v. Letter from Jaswant Singh, MP dated 31 May 2013
- vi. Letter from Ajay Sancheti dated 13 June 2013
- vii. Another letter from Ajay Sancheti dated 21 June 2013

Some of these letters were related to the India-UAE (Abu Dhabi) Bilateral Air Services Agreement and some were related to the Jet Airways - Etihad equity stake proposal. The action taken on each of these letters is as follows:

- i. Matters relating to the Air Services Agreement were referred to the Ministry of Civil Aviation for examination and appropriate action.
- ii. Matters relating to the Jet Airways - Etihad equity stake were referred to the Ministry of Civil Aviation, Department of Industrial Policy & Promotion, Department of Economic Affairs and the Ministry of Corporate Affairs for examination and appropriate action, as they were concerned with various aspects of the complaints.
- iii. Issues raised in the letters relating to security concerns in the context of the FDI policy in Civil Aviation were referred to the Cabinet Secretary for examination to suggest whether there is a need to look into any issues afresh.

As far as the Bilateral Air Services Agreement was concerned, the Cabinet Note was asked to be kept in abeyance till responses on letters with complaints on the agreement and on security concerns were received.

### **Conclusions**

Some of the facts to be noted from the above are:

- i. The Minister of Civil Aviation approached the Prime Minister seeking clearance for concluding the seat entitlement MoU.
- ii. The Prime Minister directed the Finance Minister, along with other Ministers, to examine the matter.

iii. After the meeting of the Ministers with the Prime Minister and reaching a common understanding of the basis of their suggestion, it was agreed to give an `in-principle` go ahead to the negotiating team which went ahead and concluded an MoU.

iv. The Prime Minister directed that the matter be brought to Cabinet much before any of the letters complaining about the seat entitlement enhancement or the Jet-Eti had equity stake were even received.

v. While the PMO wanted the Cabinet Note modified to reflect the sequence of events and the discussions better, nowhere was there a suggestion to change the decision sought in the note, which is the ex-post facto approval of the MoU.

vi. As for the Jet-Eti had equity stake proposal, this is a matter for consideration by concerned departments and agencies and all complaints were referred to them as per usual practice.

15. Media reports which selectively report some of the above facts or documents or are not based on full knowledge of facts do not reveal the full picture or the detailed discussions that took place on the bilateral arrangements. As for the equity stake matter, that is a matter still under examination and there is no question of backtracking or disowning it as it is not an agreement with the government.

For attachments, see:

<http://pib.nic.in/archieve/others/2013/jul/d2013070202.jpeg>

<http://pib.nic.in/archieve/others/2013/jul/d2013070203.jpeg>

<http://pib.nic.in/archieve/others/2013/jul/d2013070204.jpeg>

<http://pib.nic.in/archieve/others/2013/jul/d2013070205.jpeg>

*Source: Press Information Bureau, New Delhi,*

<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx?relid=96968>

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## SPECIFIC ISSUES

### j. HAJJ

#### **24. Reduction in Hajj 2013 Quota, New Delhi, 8 July 2013.**

The India – Saudi Arabia Bilateral Agreement on Hajj 2013 was signed on 16 March 2013 in Jeddah. This Agreement specified the Hajj 2013 Quota for India at 170,025 seats comprising 125,025 seats for pilgrims facilitated by Hajj Committee of India (HCOI), Mumbai and 45,000 for pilgrims through Private Tour Operators (PTOs).

The Embassy of Saudi Arabia, New Delhi informed the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) on 5 June 2013 that the Saudi authorities had imposed a 50 per cent reduction in the Hajj 2013 quota on local (Saudi) applicants and 20 per cent on all foreign Hajj pilgrims to facilitate the infra-

structure work being carried out around the "Haram Sharif" and to keep the area safe and secure for the pilgrims.

The MEA took up the matter with the authorities in Saudi Arabia and conveyed its concern on the 20 per cent reduction in our quota from 1, 70,025 seats to 1, 36,020 seats and sought a reconsideration of the decision. On 21 June 2013, Government of Saudi Arabia formally conveyed its inability to accede to our request.

In this regard, it may be noted, (i) the Hajj 2013 pilgrims of HCOI have already been selected and partial payments received from them, (ii) work in respect of arranging their accommodation and air transport is in advanced stages, (iii) Most Hajj 2013 HCOI pilgrims (123,511) are first timers since, from Hajj 2013, Hajj through HCOI is restricted to "only once in a life time" as against the earlier "once in 5 years". The eligible Hajj 2013 PTOs, however, are yet to be announced.

Keeping in view the above, it has been decided to effect the 20 per cent reduction (34,005 seats) for Hajj 2013 by the Saudi Government out of the existing quota (45,000) of PTOs. Cancellations by HCOI pilgrims till date will be transferred to the eligible Hajj 2013 PTOs, to the extent possible.

*Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, <http://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/21917/Reduction+in+Hajj+2013+Quota>*

## **k. SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST**

### **25. Statement by Ambassador Asoke Kumar Mukerji, Permanent Representative, at the UN Security Council Open Debate on Situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian Question, 23 July 2013.**

Thank you, Madam President,

Let me begin by expressing our appreciation of the US delegation for convening this Quarterly open debate, which will allow the Council to take stock of recent developments in the Middle East, including the State of Palestine. I would like to thank Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Robert Serry for his comprehensive briefing.

Madam President, we welcome US efforts, including the visits of Secretary of State John Kerry, to re-engage Israel and Palestine in direct talks. We hope that the recent announcement of the two sides to re-start direct talks after perhaps one of the longest period of stalemate since the signing of the Oslo Accords will lead to concrete results.

In this context, it is necessary to address the issue of Israeli settlement activities, which have continued unabated and remain a serious obstacle. These activities are not only illegal, but also pose a serious threat to the two-state solution. We join others in urging Israel to stop settlement activities.

The blockade of Gaza is also continuing and adversely affecting essential services, economic activities and infrastructure development. While we appreciate measures taken by Israel to allow flow of essential goods into Gaza, these measures cannot be a substitute for lifting the blockade.

The Palestinian Authority continues to face one of the worst financial crises that threaten to erode the progress made in building Palestinian state institutions. It is important that international community continue to support financial needs of the Palestine authority.

Madam President, as a member of this Council during 2011-12, India supported Palestine's bid for full and equal membership of the United Nations. Continuing this support, India cosponsored the General Assembly resolution in November 2012 that upgraded the status of Palestine to a non-member Observer State.

India continues to partner with the Palestinian Authority in its socio-economic development, including through the provision of direct budgetary grant, training programmes and IBSA projects.

India also continues its consistent support for a negotiated solution to the Israeli Palestinian issue, resulting in a sovereign, independent, viable and united State of Palestine living within secure and recognized borders with East Jerusalem as its capital, side by side and at peace with Israel as endorsed in various United Nations Resolutions, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Quartet Road Map. We call on the international community to redouble its efforts for an early resolution of this conflict.

Before I conclude, Madam President, let me express our deep concern at the deterioration of the situation in Syria. We look forward to an early holding of the Geneva-2 Conference which should help commence a Syrian-led inclusive political dialogue that resolves the current crisis and meets the legitimate aspirations of all sections of Syrian society. Any further militarization will only exacerbate the conflict and must be avoided by all parties concerned, internal as well as external.

I thank you.

*Source: Permanent Mission of India to the United Nations, New York, <http://www.un.int/india/2013/pmi54.pdf>*

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**Compiled by Alvite N**

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